

Rodger

A LETTER

TO

THE CITIZENS OF ABERDEEN,

ON THE

IMPROVEMENT

OF THEIR

ACADEMICAL INSTITUTIONS.

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“Verum non est desperandum ; fortasse non canimus surdis. Nec enim in tam malo statu res est, ut desint sanæ mentes, quibus et veritas placeat et monstratum sibi rectum iter et videant et sequantur.”

LACTANTIUS.

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P R E F A T O R Y N O T E .

IN finally dismissing the following pages from my hand, I have two requests to make ; *first*, That the Public will forgive me for speaking more at large about certain matters connected with the Humanity Class than about other things that may be equally important ; for this plain reason, that I understand these matters best, and am best fitted to speak decidedly on them. *Second*, That they will do me the favour, if they read the Text, to read also the Notes which were added afterwards, and contain, besides important qualifications and illustrations of the text, a great weight of authority on points of Education Reform, too important to be allowed to rest on the statements and reasonings of an individual.



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LETTER, &c.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

ABERDEEN is, at the present moment, one of the chief cities of the empire; and the projected railroads, that cause the increase of large towns as naturally as the decrease of small ones, will certainly bring it into yet greater importance. It is unquestionably the mercantile and commercial capital of the north; and it is also, or ought to be, the literary and academical capital, seeing that it has for many ages possessed, and still possesses, two Universities. What a high value you, though a people essentially mercantile, set upon these scientific institutions, you have on various occasions shown; but never more than when, on a late occasion, you came forward to assist the Government in raising the new buildings of Marischal College—a structure which, for the classical chasteness of its design, excites the just admiration of every intelligent stranger. It is in behalf of this and the neighbouring institution (for it is impossible to separate them) that I purpose, on the present occasion, to address to you a few lines, which I hope may not prove unworthy of your attentive consideration. Stone and lime, you all know, cannot make a University, any more than a bird's nest in the month of February, without a west wind, can make the spring. There are not a few academical corporations in Germany that have no University buildings at all, and yet they produce scholars known to all Europe, before whom we, in this *Ultima Thule*, have only too good cause to blush.* What I wish to direct your attention to, therefore, is this—having got the shell, whether the kernel is correspondent; admiring the fair proportions of the outward body,

* *Pinkerton*, in the Preface to his History of Scotland, gives four causes for our great inferiority in scholarship—(1) our remote situation; (2) our poverty; (3) want of public libraries; (4) fanaticism!

whether you find equally good reason to congratulate yourselves on the healthiness and vigour of the indwelling soul; thanking you most heartily as I do for the substantiality and elegance with which you have erected the garden wall, whether I may not have good reason to apply to you for a hoe and a spade to break the clod, and a little manure to stimulate the soil.

Do you ask why *I*, in particular, come forward to make this public question, and why I direct it to *you* rather than to any other body? To the first point it might be sufficient to reply that I feel moved to speak, that I am speaking on a subject on which I possess good information, and that I consider public discussion on public matters to be a public benefit; but I may add, also, that my opinion on the great matter of Academical Reform in Aberdeen, *valeat quantum valeat*, as the lawyers say, was not, and could not have been, registered before the friends of education in this quarter, at the time when most of my brethren in both Colleges stated their views to the University Commissioners, and that therefore it is my special privilege to have it publicly registered now. To the second point the reply is equally plain; I address these words specially to you, the inhabitants of Aberdeen, not only because you above all others have the most vital interest in the matter, but because I see no other quarter in which I am likely to find a more ready ear. I see no minister of public instruction—no royal commission making (according to the reasonable wish of one of my colleagues) an academical visitation every ten years*—no education board—not even a Town Council (as in Edinburgh) that possesses any supreme, controlling, and regulative power over the Academical Institutions of this place. I see a Rector, an intelligent man whom I respect; but an efficient Rectorial Court is a thing of which I know nothing. I see a Senatus Academicus, composed of most respectable Professors in New Aberdeen, and I see another body constituted in the same way in Old Aberdeen; but I look in vain for a hearty or even a formal co-operation of these two learned bodies for the purpose of achieving any great or even any small object of Academical Reform in this part of Scotland. To whom, therefore, can I apply? Who is the supreme and moving power in this country? Not the Queen, not the Premier, not the Ministry, but **THE PUBLIC HAVING A**

* “I think it would be of great importance to the Scotch Universities to be visited by a royal commission once every ten years.”—*Dr. Cruickshank. Evidence, 1827, p. 97.*

LOCAL INTEREST? To the PUBLIC, therefore, I appeal; to the men who, some fifteen years ago, carried Catholic Emancipation and the Reform Bill, and who, whether under the name of Whigs or Tories, are at the present moment achieving all that a future generation shall look back to with gratitude, as the fruits of a sound and a well-calculated legislation. I am much mistaken if any great question relating to national education will be listened to by these men with indifference; and there are certain matters in the great court of public opinion, as in the forum of private conscience, that, when once fairly heard, are already decided.

Do not imagine, however, that, because I speak thus, I look upon myself as about to give utterance to something of new and strange importance to the good city of Aberdeen. I have little to say that has not been said already. I should, indeed, consider it most impertinent in me, whether as a private individual, or as one Professor among many, to bring before you, in this public manner, any educational whims and crotchets of my own, however ingenious; the gist of what I mean to say, on the present occasion, you will find in the recorded opinions of my brother Professors in both Colleges, and (what is of more importance) in the registered judgment of the highly intelligent men who were members of both University Commissions. My business, in these pages, is merely to say what persons far superior to myself have already said, but to say it (for this also is an element in the question) in my own way, and from my own point of view. My plain, practical object is to ask—are the recorded opinions of these very learned Professors, is the registered judgment of these highly intelligent Commissioners, to remain for ever a dead letter?

In handling this matter (and I shall endeavour to discuss it with all the brevity that is consistent with clearness), the following points seem to deserve especial prominence:—

- I.—The elevation of the Academical Standard.
- II.—The extension of the Curriculum.
- III.—The Bursary System. Scholarships. Professors' Salaries.
- IV.—The Degree of A.M.
- V.—The Union of the Colleges.

I.—Now, in the first place, as to the measure of the academical standard in Scotland—that its present low grade lies at the root of many of our worst educational evils, or is rather the most obvious symptom of our present academical

degradation, has been publicly testified by practical men of all parties, and requires, indeed, only to be stated distinctly to be sensibly appreciated. What a startling, and yet what a true enunciation is that of Professor Pillans in reference to this matter, when he says that, in a Scottish Humanity class, “the more learning and erudition a professorial prelection displays, the less chance is there of its doing any good”!* The plain fact is, that a man with wings, or in a balloon, is the worst possible guide to a creature creeping on all-fours, or painfully endeavouring to walk; and that, therefore, the first duty of a Scotch Professor of Humanity is to clip his classical wings (if he has any); for there is no necessity for anything but creeping, with here and there an attempt at walking, in our Latin palæstra. It is a fact in the educational history of Scotland, to which perhaps no other country affords a parallel, that the Professor of Humanity in the metropolitan University, finds “a great proportion of the students of the junior class so deficient in elementary knowledge,” that he is obliged to occupy a considerable portion of the session in drilling a “very great number” of these academicians in “Mair’s Introduction”!!!† And how is it in Aberdeen? My respected and learned colleague in the sister institution, the Reverend Dr. Forbes of Old Machar, very shortly after my installation as Professor in Marischal College, told me—I remember well—most emphatically, that no person could hope to do any good as a teacher in a Scottish University who did not know that a Professor in Aberdeen was merely another name for a schoolmaster, and a University another name for a school. This observation was not new to me. I had suspected something of the kind long before; but each successive year’s experience in the delicate art of pædagogy has furnished me with additional proofs of the immense practical importance of the truth thus expressed. And yet, when I compare the first Humanity Class in Marischal College with the corresponding class in any other University, so far as mere pitch of Latinity goes, I have no particular reason to complain. That “very great number” deficient in the rude elements of grammar, of whom Professor Pillans complains, dwindles with me to some four or five, or it may be, on occasions, to a dozen in a class of between forty and fifty; and my plan of dealing with them is a very short one. I simply tell them that they have made a mistake in coming to a Univer-

* University Commission of 1826. Edinburgh Evidence, p. 441.

† Evidence as above, p. 437.

sity class so unprepared ; that it is not my business to teach the elements of grammar ; and that, if they wish to do any good, they must set themselves stoutly to work through the Grammatical Exercises, or some such book, during the vacation, otherwise they will not only reap no fruit from their hours of study spent in my class-room, but may be remanded back to the first class, when they come to present themselves for admission to the second ; which accordingly sometimes happens. With all this, however, accomplished as the Aberdeen schoolmasters generally are in the grand preparatory substructure of grammatical drilling, and determined as I myself am not to allow myself to be dragged down deeper than need be in the mire of academical mediocrity, still I cannot but feel that this lamentable mediocrity is the element in which I must generally move, and that there is something very low and unambitious, not to say puerile and degrading, in the whole scholastic atmosphere of Scottish Universities, so far at least as I have had any experience of them. What it is that I specially complain of in the preparatory training of my students will be stated more conveniently afterwards ; in the meanwhile, I beseech the reflective reader to cast a glance at the beggarly elements of which the Junior Greek and Mathematical Classes are composed ; and if he does not then blush for the academical position of our good city, he may throw down this paper forthwith, for it is not to men of such creeping aspirations and limited notions on public education that these lines are addressed. Contemplate, for a moment, the position of a man of real talent and professional enthusiasm in the First Mathematical and First Greek Class of any University in Scotland. Between the natural desire to keep his standard as high as possible, “ making no compromise ” (as Professor Pillans expresses it) of academical dignity, and the consuetudinary necessity imposed upon him to commence with the simplest rudiments of puerile instruction, he is apt to sway and waver in a series of most uncertain and unsatisfactory attempts to combine incompatibilities. If he is an ambitious man, with a touch of vanity and a love of display, his natural endeavour will be to hurry on the weak and the raw for the sake of the more mature and vigorous student. If, on the other hand, he is of a slow and steady temperament, precise and exact, quiet and unpretending, he will consider that safe steps actually placed for the many are more his business, than the opportunity of magnificent flights opened up for the few. Of the two extremes in the method of academic teaching, the latter is unquestionably the less perilous ; for the first

plan may produce superficiality and confusion in all, while the second, however humble its ambition, is sure to afford complaint of an unstable and insufficient foundation to none.* The consequence of this state of things is that, in a Scottish University, as at present constituted, everything tends to clip the wings, to prune the ambition, and to chill the enthusiasm of an enterprising Professor. Slow, cautious, and creeping mediocrity, whether naturally existing or self-imposed from motives of duty, becomes the highest scholastic virtue, till at length the most rational apprehension, on the appointment of a new Professor, has become, whether he may not be too clever for the students. Such a state of things is not creditable to the country in which it occurs. That it occurs in Scotland over the length and breadth of the land, and especially here in Aberdeen, is an undeniable FACT. I write these pages to ask you, the citizens of Aberdeen, why and how it is so, and whether you will sit down and quietly permit it for ever to remain so.

WHY IS IT SO, AND HOW IS IT SO? I blame no man, and no body of men, for complex social evils of any kind; but the causes of this low state of academical education in Scotland appear to me plain enough. One cause, no doubt, is that Scotland is a poor country, and has accordingly had to strive with a meagre necessity, where more favoured nations could talk of convenience and luxury. Now, all education is, in some sense, a luxury, and academical education essentially so.† The consequence is, that our whole educational establishment—the parochial especially, which is the foundation of the whole—has been fitted out in the most scanty and niggardly style imaginable; and as the Universities do not stand alone, but can only put on the capital where the shaft of the pillar ends, it is manifest that the whole fabric, from base to cornice, will, to the intelligent spectator, present a pitiful conglomeration of the most stunted dwarfishness, and the most ragged patchwork. But the poverty of the country will

* In estimating the value of the slow, safe, and rudimentary system of academic teaching, we must, at the same time, not forget that the praise gained by those Professors who practise it is purchased at the dear price of *converting a UNIVERSITY altogether into a SCHOOL, and fixing the stamp of a thorough and permanent degradation on the academical institutions of the country*; while, on the other hand, in behalf of the Professor who starts with a high standard, it may be said that his conduct forces a great proportion, at least all the most earnest and talented of his students, not to come to College without something like an adequate preparation.

† “The learned languages are luxuries.”—WYSE *on Education Reform*. This is the truth; but in Aberdeen we make of them rags for every beggar. It is a monstrous absurdity.

not explain the whole evil. The principle of parity professed in our republican Church must also be brought in to explain a considerable part of the phenomenon. Our Universities, however low, supplied our young clerical aspirants with as much learning as a ministry, busy to a man with the active duties of their profession, required. Add to this, the indifference of the landed aristocracy generally (for there are noble exceptions) to institutions with which they are either very remotely or not at all connected; consider, also, that education in this country is a thing which belongs to no man's special superintendence, but to the Church only in a few accidental points, and to chance in all essentials; and out of these elements you will have no difficulty in constructing a satisfactory theory of the present low state of academical education in the good city of Aberdeen.* But the matter is too serious for mere theorizing; the time is come when all classes are awake to their gross sins of omission in the matter of education in Scotland; we can no longer plead such absolute poverty; ignorance no longer affords an excuse for indifference. What, then, is to be done? All are agreed on that subject; BEGIN WITH THE SCHOOLS, ESPECIALLY THE PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS; MAKE THE PROFESSION OF A SCHOOLMASTER RESPECTABLE. For herein lies unquestionably one of our great public sins as a people—we prate about our parochial schools, and we starve our parochial schoolmasters. On this point, I crave your particular attention to the following evidence, given before the University Commission of 1826, by the experienced educationist so often already quoted:—"Do you think it would be very difficult to find a sufficient number of persons having a competent knowledge of Greek, to fill the situation of schoolmasters, capable of teaching the elementary parts of that language?"—"I do not think it would be difficult, if there were some temptation in point of emolument; but, upon the present system, as it was embodied by the last Schoolmasters' Act, in 1803, it would be found very difficult. The encouragement is so small, that you can hardly expect a man who has such a knowledge of Greek as we suppose necessary, to devote a lifetime to the teaching of a parish school, where his emoluments, including salary and fees,

* It is the most obvious and superficial of all things, when education stands low in a University, to blame the Professors. They may be to blame in many points unquestionably, but the real cause lies much deeper. "*Honos alit artes, omnesque incenduntur ad studia gloriâ, jucentque ea semper quæ apud quosque improbantur,*" says CICERO. It is the general corrupt atmosphere of public feeling that has infected the Universities.

are very often under, and seldom much above £60 a-year, and where the Act of Parliament ordains that his house shall consist of not more than two apartments. With such acquirements as such a knowledge generally presupposes, he would look to higher objects. It is a common enough opinion, that it is of advantage to have a young man as parish schoolmaster who has a view to the ministry, because it secures a higher class of individuals; but that, as a general principle, has always appeared to me to be a capital mistake. A man who has views to a higher ulterior object, never does the duties of the inferior station well, when it happens, as in this instance, that the conscientious and able performance of those duties has no effect in promoting his views in the higher station he aspires to. I have known many instances of young men who had gone through a pretty complete course of academical education, and yet made very indifferent parish schoolmasters for that reason. As soon as they were licensed to be preachers, their chief ambition was, not to teach the school well, but to preach up and down the country. The most desirable thing for Scotland would be, to raise the emoluments of schoolmasters in such proportion as to tempt a man of respectable talents and acquirements to devote himself to that profession for life."

I call upon the citizens of Aberdeen, therefore, if they are really in earnest about elevating their Universities, to use all their influence in and out of Parliament, for the purpose of elevating the status of that most laborious and ill-requited public servant, the Parochial Schoolmaster. But it will not be sufficient to rest contented with improving the Parochial Schools. In all countries (such as Germany and Holland) where a well-organized educational machinery exists, the custom (so common in meagre Scotland) of stepping directly from the Parochial School into the First Humanity Class, does not exist; there is an intermediate class of schools—the *Gymnasia* or *Gelehrte Schulen*—through which all young men destined for an Academical education must pass. In order, therefore, to enable the Professors in the Universities to start fair and on a sound foundation, our higher schools must be more fully equipped than they now are in many places; and in some places, like the new Colleges in Ireland, they will require to be added altogether. Hear, on this point, the evidence of a very distinguished scholar, and a highly successful teacher, the Reverend Archdeacon Williams of the Edinburgh Academy. "In my opinion there is, in Scotland, a great want of intermediate schools between the Parochia-

School and the College. *If there could be a dozen or twenty schools adapted for young men between thirteen and sixteen, I should look upon it as a very great improvement in Scotch education.* I would have these schools scattered in the different burgh towns, with a building adapted for the purpose, and £100 a-year of salary. I am satisfied that the expense would not be very great, and the benefit would be most important.* The soundness of the view here expressed has been recognized in many cases practically by the advancing intelligence of the middle classes in our large towns, where we find, within the last few years, flourishing upper schools on a liberal and generous scale, that forms a pleasing contrast to the one-sided narrowness of the old burgh "Grammar School." In Aberdeen, as already remarked, there is no cause to complain of the preparatory school-work, so far as mere pitch of verbal Latinity goes; in other respects however, which I shall mention immediately, I hope I shall offend no intelligent citizen of this place, when I say that our burgh school stands in need of no inconsiderable reform, and that in this place generally, in some branches of pædagogy, we are a little behind the age. One thing only I shall mention here, and it is a most important thing. The salaries of our Grammar School teachers are such as a rich and wealthy city, with 60,000 inhabitants, should be ashamed to give. We have at present a man of highly distinguished scholarship at the head of our principal school; and in this we are fortunate, but it is impossible to say more. That we possess a distinguished scholar at the head of our burgh school is infinitely more than we deserve. For a city of such importance and character as Aberdeen, £500 a-year of salary and emoluments were a small annual tax to pay for the certainty of having a first-rate man to superintend the education of our ingenuous youth. If education is to be advanced in such a city, it is necessary that it should hold out not merely such a scanty remuneration as the best local talent may be willing to accept, but, if we would do justice to ourselves, we must be eager to hold out glittering prizes for which distant talent shall think it an honour to compete. We must not be content merely to find a good scholar at home, but we must invite the best scholar from abroad; we must strive to bring men into the midst of us who have a large and varied educational experience, the strange elements of which may act with a healthy stimulus on our native institutions. Now, so far is this from being the case, that no teacher of any

* Evidence, 1826. Edinburgh, 591.

eminence can afford to come from any considerable town to the Grammar School in Aberdeen, so pitiful are the emoluments.* This is a melancholy fact. I have myself been forced to give such information to inquirers as deterred them from all idea of attempting to make the great northern capital the field of their brilliant educational campaigns. This is a matter that ought instantly to be remedied. Let the Grammar School be extended and improved in some points to be immediately hinted, and the public of Aberdeen will find no difficulty in providing £200 a-year at least of income to each teacher, and £400 (as a minimum) to the Rector. We have plenty of money. I am not rich; but there is nothing I would more willingly pay than my quota of an education tax for the burgh of Aberdeen. It appears to me that the system of local self-taxation for local purposes might be carried out to a much greater extent than it now is. It would save us all the expense and vexation of an appeal to Parliament. Look at what the Free Church has done in the way of raising money! After that we need despair of nothing.

This matter of the preparatory schools being settled—settled as it only can be by the Scottish public of the north applying themselves earnestly, not in vain and self-laudatory speeches, but in very deed and truth, to their improvement and elevation—another matter connected with it is encumbered with no difficulty. Would it not be beneficial, I have often heard it asked, that the Colleges themselves should fix a minimum standard, beneath which no student shall be admitted into Academical citizenship? Is it not in the power principally of the Professors themselves to fix both the point from which the students shall start, and the goal which they shall attain? To such questions I answer, that it is in their power to a certain extent; and I do not think that our two institutions here are free from blame in not having taken, by this time, some decided steps to put a stop to the degrading prac-

* I request the inhabitants of Aberdeen—those at least who have any vital and earnest interest in the progress of education—to *inquire particularly into the statistics of this matter*; and they will find, perhaps, that the salaries paid to the teachers of our public schools, and the fees paid by the students, are scanty and meagre beyond example in Scotland. Let it be borne in mind that Aberdeen is the third city in Scotland, and ought to show an example of munificence, not of shabbiness, to towns of minor note, in intellectual and moral, as well as in material and mechanical matters. I would also recommend those who are earnest in the matter, to inquire what the salary and emoluments are of teachers in English schools belonging to towns of the same scale as Aberdeen, or even considerably less. Perhaps it may turn out that a schoolmaster in England can afford to live much more like a gentleman than a Professor in Marischal College.

tice of teaching the elements of Greek, and the rudimentary Mathematics of triangles and circles in the University. Since the last time when the question of Academical Reform was stirred, a much greater proportion of our young men come up to us prepared with some rudimentary knowledge of the Greek Grammar; and if a strict entrance examination were enforced, there can be little doubt that, in a few years, the teaching of the Greek Grammar in the Colleges might be altogether discontinued. But to any decided move of this kind there has always stood in the way the formidable practical objection of the two Universities, which hate one another (I have been given to understand) so heartily, that they will do nothing in concert, and fear one another with such jealousy, that they will do nothing separately. Besides, it is unquestionably much more the duty of the public not to send their sons unprepared to College, than it is the duty of the University to shut the doors of instruction upon them when they are sent. Public teachers are appointed by the public to give instruction to all and sundry who ask for it; and the kind and degree of instruction which they communicate is regulated more by the public demand than by anything else. If, therefore, the Professors of our northern Universities have continued, up to the present hour, to deal in the mere beggarly rudiments of literature and science, one of the principal causes of this is that the public has made no earnest appeal to them for anything higher. They have given us bricks to build with; and if, out of these materials, we have raised no marble palace, the fault lies with the quarry, neither with the mason nor with the architect. If the Professors have been slow, the public have been indifferent. If, therefore, you wish us to move, move yourselves first, and give us a jog. We are men, and, like all men, require to be spurred. We are a corporation also, and, like all corporations, do not consider ourselves responsible for our misdeeds.

II.—I proceed, now, to the second great point of Reform proposed—*The extension of the Academical Curriculum*. This embraces two matters very different, but equally important. *First*, the extension of the field of instruction by embracing new subjects; *Second*, the extension of the period of instruction by the addition of a summer session.

There is an error in the practice of pædagogy which the Germans, who understand these matters well, designate by the term *Vielwisserei*, which, if we may coin a word to translate it literally, means *muchknowery*—that is the prac-

tice of drilling the young mind successively through a whole encyclopædia of rudimentary science, instead of training it gradually to a consciousness of manly strength, by a long-continued devotion to one subject, according to the famous practice of Oxford and Cambridge. Now, it may be thought by some that we, in our Scottish Universities, have already quite enough of this *Vielwisserei*, or heterogenous cramming, and that we ought rather to talk of contracting than of extending the compass of our Academical Curriculum. To this, however, it may be most satisfactorily replied, that the successive direction of the faculties to various subjects does not necessarily distract, but rather enrich the mind, provided always that, before proceeding to take out high academical honours, the student be allowed to concentrate his energies upon that division of his studies—the literary or the scientific—which is most congenial to his tastes; and provided, also, that, in a University establishment, embracing a full complement of Professorships in the different branches of science and literature, while some departments are made *imperative* on all, others be left as much as possible *optional*. Thus, for instance, if the two Universities were united to-morrow, in one of which Chemistry, and in the other Natural History, is at present an imperative part of the regular curriculum, then, in the conjoined University, let there, by all means, be a Professor of Chemistry attached to the Faculty of Arts, and also a Professor of Natural History, but let it be optional to the regular student to attend either the one or the other, as he pleases. It appears to me, indeed, that, generally speaking, there is far too little of this healthy option afforded to our Aberdeen students; but the mechanical monotony of our course of study proceeds necessarily from the meagreness with which we are furnished with academical prelectors. Where there are few branches taught, and only one teacher to each branch, choice becomes impossible; and it is only when our Universities shall have been considerably extended beyond their present beggarliness, that any rational fear of *Vielwisserei* can be indulged, or any strong necessity for a large application of the optional principle shall be felt.*

What, then, are the greatest and most striking omissions in the present imperative curriculum of both Colleges? One defect, I think, must strike all, for it is a most glaring, and

* "I think the system of education here, as compared with the system of education in the south, is considerably deficient. I think we might have more Professorships, and the system might be improved much."—*Professor Scott. Evidence, 1827, p. 44.*

in its wide-working influence, a most pernicious one. I mean the want of a Professorship of the English language and literature; of a class, not merely for critical prelection on our great English writers, from Chaucer to Tennyson (which is certainly a desirable thing), but a class which should serve as a school of composition and elocution, and act as a practical introduction to the great art—an art no less useful than ornamental—of writing, reading, and speaking our own language with propriety. How this great blank came to exist in the original scheme of our Universities, a very superficial knowledge of literary and scientific history will enable any one to understand; but if there be a person who thinks that such a defect can be looked upon with indifference *now*, I will take the liberty of saying that his indifference savours more of pedantry than of true learning, and if he be a nice Latinist, I will quote Cicero against him, in the well-known words—“*Mihi quidem nulli satis eruditi videntur quibus NOSTRA IGNOTA SUNT.*” Nothing, indeed, could have startled Cicero and Quintilian, and the great rhetorical writers of the ancient world, more than our modern fashion of hardening the soft brains of our ingenuous youth, by constant and exclusive friction against the harsh grammatical angularities of two dead languages, while the living blood of the mother tongue is allowed to stagnate and mantle itself with mouldiness, to become thin, and white, and watery in the veins. The Roman youths were constantly exercised in original composition and declamation, as we might learn even from that famous line of the satirist—

I demens, et sævas curre per Alpes
Ut PUERIS placeas, et DECLAMATIO fias.

I am entitled to speak on this subject with feeling and with decision, because there is no Professor in Marischal College who necessarily suffers more than I do, from a general ignorance of the principles and practice of English composition on the part of his students. My colleague, Dr. Brown, Professor of Greek, having to teach (according to the present puerile system) a new language from its very first elements, has his attention, of course, directed more to the purely grammatical and less to the rhetorical elements; but the students who come to me, after three, four, or even five years of close and continued application to the Latin language, are entitled to expect from the Professor of *Literæ Humaniores*—which once meant *Polite Letters*—something more than the mere grammar

tical and verbal shell of the Classics—something more nourishing and more inspiring than the subtlest philological mysteries of the relative *qui*, *quæ*, *quod*, and the subjunctive mood. This something which they are entitled to demand is, that I shall use the materials presented by the Classics as a means of stimulating their young budding imaginations, and awakening their latent taste for all that is beautiful and sublime in nature and art. This plain and practical end, however—the only one, be it remarked, that, in a mixed and popular class, a Professor of Latin literature, in this country, can wisely strive after—is, by the present constitution of our Grammar School and University, put almost altogether out of my reach; and the Humanity Class, for all those high and humanizing purposes which such a class is calculated to subserve, becomes practically—I speak it with sorrow—a mockery and a sham. The main cause of this lies, there can be no doubt, in the total neglect of English composition as *a prominent and separate object* of study, both in the Grammar School and in the University, and in the consequently torpid and dull state of those imaginative and emotional susceptibilities, on the energetic action of which the appreciation of fine composition, whether in the native or in a foreign tongue, depends.* I know, indeed, that an irregular and feverish imagination, unaccompanied by a sound knowledge of facts, and untempered by judgment, leads, in the wide fields of literature and learning, no less than in the practical business of life, to the most extravagant errors, and the most pernicious delusions. Of this the Germans, otherwise infinitely our superiors in all matters of erudition, supply us with abundant examples; but I know also, that imagination, working upon memory, is as surely the key to all higher scholarship as a fine musical ear is the only access to the soul for the subtle harmonies of Beethoven. The success, indeed, with which the study of Greek and Roman literature can be carried on beyond the mere beggarly elements of grammar depends altogether on the susceptibility and

* I am speaking of the Humanity Class in Marischal College, which is first in the curriculum, but hear the following evidence with regard to the shameful ignorance of English composition in the fourth class of the sister institution:—"In my class, the first series of essays is generally read by the Professor, without mentioning the names of the authors. This is done to save, as far as possible, the feelings of individuals, for it often happens that young men of talent pass through the inferior classes though most completely ignorant of English composition! Errors in grammar, and even in orthography, are still of frequent occurrence," &c. PROFESSOR SCOTT.—*Evidence of 1827*, p. 40.

compass of the imaginative faculty. The mere logical talent, the dividing and dissecting intellect, however cunningly cultivated, has in itself no appreciation of what is beautiful and sublime in composition; and mere memory, however hard, is like a mouth all teeth and no palate, munching with equal relish grapes and gravel. He is the best classical scholar, not who can discourse with the most metaphysical curiousness on the indicative and the potential mood—not who can tell upon the points of his fingers every shade of every meaning of every word that is laboriously noted in Scheller and Facciolati—but he alone deserves that respected name who cherishes habitually before his mind's eye the most accurate, vivid, and comprehensive pictures of ancient life in its most noble manifestations; and these cannot be marked, without the cunningly combining power of a vivacious imagination, ever active by its subtle chemistry, to dispose in just quantities and proportions those vast materials of erudition which a well exercised memory supplies. Now, what I complain of is, that, in the educational system of Aberdeen, neither in the School nor in the University is there any care taken to cultivate this imaginative faculty; nay rather, I should say, that whatsoever studies, arts, and exercises tend to refine and to elevate the imagination are, in Aberdeen, particularly neglected; and the consequence is, that classical learning in this place has become a barren, stunted tree, showing a tough grammatical stump, and a meagre array of dry logical branches, but altogether destitute of leaves, of blossom, and of fruit.*

My remedy for this evil is a very simple one; and not mine only, but that of every person who, whether as a theorizer or as a practical educationist, ever bestowed a moment's thought on the subject. Put an end forthwith to the present narrow system of making the principal school of the city merely and exclusively a Latin school; let a teacher of the English language, of English composition, of the elements of English literature, and of elocution, be appointed there to-morrow; and let him be appointed *fairly*. Let him, in the first place, be an Englishman, or at least a Scotchman who has lived long in England, and been in a manner naturalized; let

* To our truly pedantic system in Aberdeen of teaching Latin and Greek to all, but English to none, applies the cutting sarcasm of Lord Byron in the lines—

“The languages, especially the dead,
The sciences, and most of all the abstruse,
The arts, at least all such as could be said
To be the most remote from common use;
In all these he was much and deeply read.”



him have to start with such an income as will induce him to remain in the place, and devote his life to the business ; let him be a man of talent and a man of taste, who can not merely take a book in his hand and dictate a few formal rules, but one who feels strongly, and who can read and recite as he feels, the moral and poetical beauties of our great writers ; let him then have a fair allotment of the time of the school, and let not Latin Grammar and the monstrous Version System (of which anon) be any longer allowed to monopolize every hour of most serious study, and the whole concentrated energy of the youthful mind.* Do this ; and let a new school-house be erected (for which I am ready to subscribe to-morrow), and call in the public of all denominations to see how your experiment is going on ; and make your upper school altogether so well furnished, and pitched so high, that no rational parent shall ever think of sending his son to College till he is at least sixteen years of age. Do all this liberally and largely, distinctly and decidedly, as you did the New Markets, and as you are doing the Railroads ; and then (with a reasonable help from neighbouring quarters), if the Universities of Aberdeen are not, within a very short time, both elevated in scale and extended in compass, most assuredly in this case neither the young men themselves, nor the parents and guardians of the young men, but the Professors and the Senatus Academicus deserve to be flogged.

We have thus, under the second head, been brought again to the distinct and unavoidable conclusion that a Reform of the Universities, to be solid and well based, must proceed from the Schools. I have mentioned the article of English composition particularly, both because it falls immediately within the range of my own experience, and because, comparing the educational statistics that I have from other parts of Scotland, it seems to be (I do not pretend to explain how) particularly neglected by the inhabitants of Aberdeen. But, without attempting to exhaust so wide a theme, there are one or two points of School Reform to which, as preparatory to Academical elevation, I would beg leave earnestly to direct the attention of the friends of education in this place. There is one science and one art made by nature, I may say specially for the improvement and the recreation of the young, of neither of which,

* To the Aberdeen Version System, as it will be exhibited below, no less than to the monopoly of Latin verses in some old-fangled English schools, applies the very witty and pointed remark of Miss Edgeworth—"Much of the time that is spent in teaching boys to walk upon stilts might be more advantageously employed in teaching them to walk well without them."

however (as of English composition), do I find the slightest traces in the Grammar School of Aberdeen. The science I allude to is NATURAL HISTORY, the art is MUSIC. My learned colleague, Dr. M'Gillivray, has often remarked to me the exceeding awkwardness and stupidity which the young men of his class display in the use of their eyes, and he has expressed astonishment that it should be so.* Now this phenomenon, which I myself also have often had occasion to remark, does not proceed from any pestilential quality of the Aberdeen atmosphere, nor from any noxious potency of the east wind so frequent in this quarter, but from the plain fact that the great majority of our young men, if not all, grow up to the verge of puberty without any particular call being made upon them to use these organs. Boys, indeed, are naturally quick observers; but as years increase and novelty diminishes, the keenness of the observing faculty will be gradually blunted, unless some care is taken to develope it in a natural way. Now, the poring for four or five hours a-day, and for four or five years, in the most eager period of life, on a Latin Grammar and Dictionary, is certainly not the most natural way to bring out the apt sensibilities of the external senses in a boy. Accordingly we find that the Germans, who are adepts in many parts of that important science of education of which some of us know scarcely the first principles; the Germans, I say, have introduced Natural History as an element into all their good schools, while with us in this quarter it is almost unknown; and the consequence is, that my fellow-labourer just named, with all his multitudinous host of flaming Brazilian parrots and bright birds of Paradise, finds it sometimes a very difficult matter to teach his ingenuous pupils the very vulgar art of staring. They will look on their blank paper, and note down the long series of professorial sentences as if an angel from heaven were dictating, but they will not observe the thing that is placed before their nose, they will not examine, they will not compare. Now, the way to remedy this is simple. Let

* It is instructive to see how this observation of the present learned Professor tallies on this point with the following testimony of his predecessor delivered before the Commission :—"In your examination of the students, do you generally find that they are tolerably acquainted with Geography before they come to College." "Very much the reverse; they are very deficient in general knowledge. Students that come to my class have generally had their attention entirely directed to the study of languages, and the study of nature is so new to them that they are generally for two or three weeks entirely lost, and it requires a good deal of management to settle their ideas, but as soon as their ideas get settled they make very rapid progress."—*Evidence of Dr. Davidson, Marischal College, before the Commission of 1829, p. 86, and in the Rev. Mr. Anderson's Second Letter, p. 13.*

the art of observing natural objects, and of describing them accurately, be taught among the simplest elements of ordinary schooling. For this purpose, two or three hours a-week are amply sufficient; and the benefit derived from it (besides the smattering of natural science, which is a very secondary consideration) will be fourfold. *First*, the eye will be trained to observe and to discriminate; *Second*, the judgment will be in a manner the most agreeable for young minds, and at the same time most profitably, exercised in the great practical art of arrangement and classification; *Third*, the power of accurate and vivid description will find an interesting subject on which to assay its first unsteady flights; and, *Fourth*, as the scientific language of Natural History is to this day Latin, a grand storehouse is forthwith opened, from which the young classical scholar can be supplied with a *copia verborum*, and with easy and instructive subjects also, for early essays in Latin composition. All these advantages resulting from the elementary study of Natural History in the preparatory schools are so obvious, and for the practical ends of pædagogy so aptly linked together, that if they have not hitherto been generally recognized, and generally acted upon in this quarter, the fact can be attributed only to that moral *vis inertiae* and intellectual doggedness that makes us so averse to make the first move in anything that condemns our former practices, and make us prefer dying like an old rat beneath the ruins of that house which the gnawings of our own teeth had principally contributed to undermine. Of all things, therefore, when the Grammar School is extended and reformed, let Natural History be introduced, not indeed as a principal (for that is not necessary), but as a subsidiary matter; and the person who should be called on to superintend this branch can be no one more conveniently than the teacher of English; partly because the Latin masters will be otherwise sufficiently occupied; partly because the art of description which so essentially belongs to it is a most useful and natural element of English composition in its earlier stages; partly because the attainment of a little knowledge of this subject is so easy, that no teacher of the English language has a right to complain of its being made subsidiary to his own peculiar qualifications. As to the other accessory use of Natural History in the schools, viz.—in assisting the study of Latin, this end also can be achieved partly by the English master, who, as an accomplished gentleman, cannot of course be ignorant of Latin; and partly, also, by the Latin masters, if they have the sense to see the advantage thus offered them. Otherwise, the Professor of Natural His-

tory will still have to complain, as I have often heard him do, that, while not a few of his students are so expert in barren grammatical subtleties as to be able to tell how Cicero's use of the subjunctive mood differs from that of Tacitus, it will require the very king-bird of the flock (and not seldom even he will fail), if a weasel should cross his path in the Links, to cry out—*Ecce Mustelam!*

As to MUSIC, the Infant Schools and the Industrial Schools and the Mechanics' Institutions are, in this matter, far ahead both of Grammar School and Colleges; and there is no conceivable reason why, in every school in Aberdeen, the young men should not be made to sing a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes every morning, as Mr. Fairbairn causes the Heriot boys to do so gallantly in Edinburgh. The fact is, our Grammar Schools and our Universities are in this, as in many other matters, lamentably behind the age; and all advances in practical pædagogy that have struck me prominently in different parts of Scotland, were connected with the schools of the mechanics, and of a class far beneath the mechanics, much more (for I do not say by any means exclusively) than with the Academies and Universities, where a superior (so called) education is given. The reason of this also is plain; the schools of the lower classes had to be constructed *ab ovo*; and no stiff, old usages and pedantic prejudices stood in the way of their being organized from heart to hand, according to that law of nature which is the will of God, and the hidden magnetic pole which regulates the variations of all healthy humanity. For myself, as an Academical person, and a teacher of polite letters through the instrumentality of Latin, I must complain to the inhabitants of Aberdeen, that I suffer not a little every Session from the gross ignorance in which I find the majority of our lads, with regard to the most elementary principles of MUSIC. They do not even know, except a stray genius here and there, the difference between a crotchet and a quaver; and yet, without this and a few other such points of elementary notation, it is impossible to give their budding curiosity any intelligible notion of a living and effective PROSODY. For, though this—to many ears, I fear, most ungrateful name—is more connected in our associations with the Grammarians than with the Musicians, yet the fact is, that the Grammarians did not beget, but merely adopted (or perhaps kidnapped) the bantling; and to this day, if you wish to understand anything beyond the hard shell of the matter, you must consult not Hephæstion and Priscian, but Aristides and Aristoxenus. But to proceed.

One other point of the preparatory schooling demands a serious word. As in a well-constituted mind the scientific and the literary tendencies hold to one another the natural and normal balance, so in a well-constituted school the arithmetical and mathematical elements must go hand in hand with the literary and classical, otherwise the healthy equilibrium of the faculties in the youthful mind is deranged, and that often to a degree beyond the remedial power of a posterior adjustment. Now, in our good city, I am afraid, there is still such an unnatural preponderance in favour, I can scarcely say of the literary, but of the merely grammatical and linguistical element, that the scientific—that is to say, the Mathematical element (for mathematics is the key of all science)—does not get fair play. Our young men, when they enter the first class of the University, *must* know Latin grammar; arithmetic they only *may* know; geometry, as a general rule, they are altogether ignorant of. This is unfair to the young men; for if a certain dexterity and nimbleness in *mental* arithmetic is not early acquired by boys, it is apt, amid the distracting elements of more advanced study, to be neglected altogether, and can indeed not be attained without such an act of moral resolution and perseverance as is beyond the power of the generality of boys. No less unfair is the same system to the Professors; for it not only forces the Professor of Mathematics to make his first class altogether and exclusively elementary, but it places the Professor of Natural Philosophy in the most unfavourable position of being obliged to transpose from their natural place, and even to omit altogether, some of the most instructive branches of his subject, for the apprehension of which the rudimentary mathematics of his students is insufficient. Now, there is nothing in the whole sphere of Education Reform more in the power of the citizens of Aberdeen than the obvious remedy of this evil. Let your mathematical teacher be considered in principle, and be treated in practice, as a person equal in dignity to your Latin teacher; let him have a more just allotment of time than that which the present monstrous version monopoly allows; let attendance on all his classes according to a graduated scale of progress, be rendered as imperative as custom and the Bursary bribe has made the Latin classes; let him be treated in all respects like a gentleman—that is to say, let his emoluments stand in some sort of decent relation to his toil and to his talents; and if you do this, there will be no longer any excuse for unripe boys coming to College before the age of sixteen; and when they do come, they can at once join the Second or the Third

Mathematical Class, and leave the First or Rudimentary Class (if the Professor still chooses, or is still required to teach it) to be attended by the few raw lads from the hills, whose unfortunate condition may still impose upon them the ungracious necessity of turning the highest scientific institution of their country into a rudimentary school. It is plain, however, that, if Aberdeen were to take the lead in such a praiseworthy act of educational progress, the other cities which act as feeders and conductors of our Universities would be forced to follow the example, and a class of rudimentary mathematics in these institutions would very soon die a natural death. Nay, more; I request you, fellow-citizens, to look about you, and inquire whether some of those towns which you are accustomed to look upon as inferior in dignity and importance to you, may not already in this and in some other points of great educational importance, have set you an example, which you have only been too slow to imitate. Look about and inquire whether the Academies of Perth, of Inverness, of Tain, of Ayr, do not send forth every year an array of young men, sixteen years of age, who, if they should enter your First and Second Mathematical Classes in Marischal College, would find that they had already travelled over the whole ground, and that, so far as novelty and progress are concerned, they could gain nothing. The benefit, whatever it might be, that they would receive, must be confined to mere repetition. Reform this matter, therefore, I beseech you, without delay. It is altogether in your own power. Put an end, once and for ever, both to the unjust ascendancy of meagre Grammar in the school, and to the degrading exhibition of puerile Mathematics in the College. There is nothing required for it but a little zeal, a little common sense, and a little courage.

The scholastic foundation being once settled on sound principles, the Academical superstructure can be magnificently raised in a moment—*provided people have only the steady will, and are determined not to be frightened by mere noise.* For there are certain persons to be found in Universities as readily as elsewhere, who, with a rocky stolidity, will oppose every change merely because it is a change, and stand in the way of every motion merely because it is a motion. But with regard to the Professorship of English Literature and Practical Rhetoric, it has already been urged as a most imperative addition to the regular Curriculum by the Professors of Marischal,* and I presume also (though here I am not so well informed) by our learned brethren of King's College. In the way of

* See the Evidence.

this, therefore, with us at least on our side of the Powis Burn, there stands no impediment. Let the thing therefore be done. It is the DUTY of the PUBLIC to do it.

I meant to have said something in this place on the MODERN LANGUAGES, especially the FRENCH and the GERMAN, which are most scurvily treated by British schools and Universities, and no where more so than in Aberdeen; but a more convenient opportunity for touching on this subject will present itself immediately. This also were the place to inquire how far the elements of CIVIL HISTORY, which, according to the very sensible academical scheme of 1755, formed an essential part of the Curriculum in Marischal College, but has been latterly absorbed by the mighty BRAHMA of Natural History, and appears only for one or two days at the end of the Session, to make an apology for its non-appearance—whether this, in a free and political country, certainly most important element of academical education could not find some respectable niche for itself, without jamming other, and no less important matters impolitely into a corner. I have a few practical suggestions to make as to this matter, which I shall be most happy to submit to any intelligent questioner, *so soon as I see the public of Aberdeen determined to take the great question of Education Reform in this place fairly by the ears.* Till then, perhaps, I have wasted too much paper already; and shall, therefore, after making a few remarks on the length of the Session, proceed to the very important and deeply-working matter of the Bursaries.

Now, as to duration of our present Session, everybody says that *five or six* months in the year for academical work is too little; and most people add, at the same time, that it is difficult to see how the time can be protracted. I am willing to confess that it is a difficult matter; but I think, also, that between the Professors and the people, something might be done, though the matter certainly is one that requires the hearty co-operation of both. That the present vacation of seven successive months is an educational evil, and an evil of the first magnitude, cannot be denied by any sane man. I am decidedly of opinion that the present session of five months, with only two holidays, is long enough *at a stretch*; but I am of opinion, no less decidedly, that after an interval of a month (April), we ought, like the German Universities, to have a Summer Session of three months. Let any one contemplate for a moment the study of Greek, as it is carried on at a Scotch University. You commence your raw youths with the Alpha, Beta, Gamma—you drill them thoroughly in the grammar—

you make them write exercises, and at the end of five months you find them painfully creeping through Xenophon's *Anabasis*, or the *Cyropædia*, the smoothest of all books. You dismiss them now for seven months, and make no inquiry after them, proving thus, in a strange way, your practical estimate of the value of a good teacher, by allowing your son to hang loose two months more without one, than he had been kept in training with one. Are you to be surprised, therefore, if you find him returning to his classical studies the second year, knowing, in nine cases out of ten, considerably less Greek than when he left them the first year? Any person who ever studied languages with success, knows that *continuity of application is of the very essence of the trick*; and if this is the case with grown men studying with a definite purpose, and under the influence of a habitual self-control, how much more must it hold of boys—lads of thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen—who, the more sound-hearted they are, the more are they predetermined by Nature not to lead in any exclusively intellectual matter, but to be led. The long vacation, therefore, of our Scottish Universities, peopled as they are by unripe boys for the most part, and not by bearded youths, is an educational solecism of the grossest kind, for which Scotland has every cause to blush. If Scotland chooses to turn her Universities into Schools—which it has long been her unworthy pleasure to do—it were only consistent that she should make these institutions observe the practices of all well-conducted schools, by keeping her sons in regular drill for nine or ten months in the year. At all events, it is clear, whatever be the grade of the Colleges, that we ought to have a summer session of three months; and the only question is, what are the difficulties that stand in the way of so desirable an arrangement? I can imagine only three difficulties. *First*, That the Professors are lazy, and are averse to the work; which indeed may well be, considering that Professors and other men are made of the same materials, and as Tacitus, with his usual shrewdness remarks, “*Subit ipsius inertia dulcedo et invisita primo desidia postremo amatur* ;” but with all this, Professors, if they are well paid (as happens here and there in Scotland), could not refuse to work, if challenged by the public; and if they are ill-paid (which is the general case), it is the business of the public to pay them better. On this head, therefore, I see no difficulty. The main obstacle, I apprehend, lies with the Scottish people themselves, who are some of them so poor that they *cannot*, and others of them so habituated to mediocrity of all kinds in academical matters,

that they *will* not make a call for this additional exertion on the part of the Professors. I should wish, however, to do injustice to no man, much less to my own countrymen. I shall, therefore (having been invited to something of the kind by the late public appeal of a highly-intelligent clergyman)* make to the citizens of Aberdeen, with regard to this matter, the following plain proposal:—There are fifty-three students in my junior class this winter; of that number, it is but reasonable to suppose that some twenty or more may be hovering about the city of Aberdeen, and within academical call during the three months of May, June, and July.† I pledge myself, therefore, to open a summer Humanity Class for the present year, and to commence the same on the 1st of May, and continue it to the end of July, teaching five hours a-week—for less would be useless, and more is unnecessary—provided always that twenty students appear, and submit themselves, as in the Winter Session, to regular academical discipline and thorough training. On any other condition, I cannot afford to do it; and unless the parents and guardians of youth are willing to comply with these conditions, it is plain the hindrance to a summer session lies not with me, the Professor, in this case, but with you, the Public.

I must make, however, one remark with regard to the practicability of a summer session in Scotland, that the original hindrance appears to me to be something that lies much deeper than either the laziness of the Professors (if indeed we are lazy, for I merely suppose the case), or the poverty, or, finally, the indifference of the Public. This deep-working cause is no other than the sad one, that, IN SCOTLAND, THERE ARE NO REWARDS TO SCHOLARSHIP. The Public become indifferent to academical excellence, because they do not see any glittering goal to which it leads; an unsatisfactory system satisfies them, because it satisfies all the demands that by the social, ecclesiastical, and academical constitution of the country are made on learning. It is nothing surprising that poverty should so often, in meagreness and rags, be the lame aspirant, where the prize is barrenness and neglect. But this

* See No. V. of a series of Letters on Education in the North, originally published in the *Aberdeen Banner* (October and November, 1845), and afterwards printed separately.

† This, however, and every arrangement for a summer session in Marischal College, supposes that the school vacation shall be advanced from July to August, otherwise the experiment must prove unsatisfactory. I know this by experience.

leads me to inquire into the third important matter, and to say a few words

III.—ON BURSARIES, SCHOLARSHIPS, and the SALARIES of PROFESSORS.

The word *Bursar* means *Pursar*—that is to say, persons whose expenses of living and studying are defrayed out of the public purse. And what sort of persons ought to have their expenses so defrayed? Plainly, those who, being qualified for study, are not able to pay their own expenses. Bursaries, therefore, are a blessing to any country, in so far as they confer the means of an academical education on persons who, having both a natural and an acquired aptitude for such a high grade of intellectual culture, would, but for such contributions from a stranger purse, be, by their circumstances, prevented altogether from receiving such an education. Now, in a poor country like Scotland, and a country especially where the common elements of education are so generally dispensed, there must be persons of this description in great numbers, and in reference to whom it admits of no sane doubt that the immense number of small bursaries attached to our two northern Universities have been productive of a very great practical benefit. Low as the Northern Universities have been sunk, they have one consolation in the midst of their disgrace, that they have not lowered their own status without, at the same time, raising the intellectual character of many who, apart from this convenient help, must have remained for ever inferior beings in the scale of intelligence. All this it is delightful to admit; but the contemplation of his own blessings is a dangerous mirror for man. We must look, therefore, a little deeper, and see whether there may not be underneath this fair grass also a slippery snake. A reference to facts will be the best stimulus to inquiry. Of the fifty-three students, whom I mentioned above as constituting my present First Humanity Class, twenty-eight (that is to say, more than the half) are bursars, and receive from the College, or from private individuals or corporations, at the sight of the College, so far as fees are concerned, *a perfectly free education*—a remarkably curious fact, within which lie some no less curious conclusions. In the first place, it is plain that Bursaries are not conferred in Aberdeen exclusively on young men possessed of decided talent and a clear vocation for academical studies; for it is not in the nature of boys or men that decided talent should be found so low as beyond the half of their number. But there is something more than this. On examination, it will

be found both that some of the best scholars, even in such a moderate class as that named, are not Bursars, and that some of the worst are Bursars. The Bursaries, therefore, in Marischal College, taken overhead, are by no means synonymous with the amount of talent in the class. The possession of them does not necessarily imply decided aptitude for academical study; it may imply fair average talent in general; or it may imply an amount of talent considerably beneath par, and no particular aptitude for academical, or, indeed, for any kind of study. I have now been teaching five years in Marischal College; and in every year, I think either the worst, or the next to the worst scholar in the class, or both perhaps, or perhaps in a bad class, half a dozen decidedly bad scholars were Bursars.* As little has the holding of a Bursary in Aberdeen anything necessarily to do with poverty. By poverty, of course, in this case, I do not mean pauperism, but such narrow circumstances as would make it no easy matter for a parent to pay the Income Tax, and to give his son a regular academical education. A Dissenting Minister, for example, with a wife and a family, and £150 a-year, has, in my opinion, a clear claim on the Bursary Fund, *in nomine pauperis*, as the lawyers say. In such and similar cases, indeed, it is, that the Bursaries work with the greatest amount of public benefit. But there are always on the roll of my students some three or four in the list of Bursars, or it may be half a dozen, or even a whole dozen on an occasion, who, so far as I know, or ever heard, have no particular case of poverty in any sense to plead. I take it, therefore, to be a custom with the citizens of this good city to take a Bursary when their son, by the fair use of his talents, shows that he deserves it. And, to speak the truth, no custom could possibly be more natural; for men are in all matters accustomed to take the good things that Providence throws in their way, without inquiring whether another person may not stand in much greater need of them. It is another question, however, how far the custom is a beneficial one. I am inclined to think it of pernicious operation, for several reasons. One thing is plain; the rich man's son is enjoying what he does not require, and perhaps at the same time keeping from a poor man's son what he does require. Another thing is equally plain; the rich man is doing a direct injury to his own moral nature; he is accustoming himself to think that provision for

* But I have never had any such sad experience with regard to the Bursars, as that which Professor Scott's evidence supplies with regard to the Bursars of King's College, "in the good old times."—See Note, p. 36 *infra*.

his son's education is no matter of his ; and he proceeds accordingly to make money for other and more selfish purposes. Another thing also is obvious ; he may be tempted to look on education altogether as a settled and ready-made thing, with which he has nothing to do, but hand in his son as quickly as possible into the University as into a Free School, to go through, without any further question, the regular monotonous routine of scholastic drilling practised there. Accustomed to claim the education of his son as a right, not to practise it as a duty, he may imperceptibly lose all impulsive generosity of soul in educational matters, and grudge no outlay of small fees so much as when they go to pay an additional Schoolmaster or Professor. For these reasons, I cannot but think it a public evil when persons not forced to do so by an obvious necessity, receive a free education, whether at a School or a University. I confess, however, that where such a practice has once crept in, it is extremely difficult to put it down ; for poverty in this question is a discretionary matter altogether, and every person values himself low enough, when custom has made him his own assessor. Besides, the evil in Aberdeen lies not so much in the sons of rich persons taking the Bursaries, as in the fact that there are so many Bursaries to take ; for, supposing that, out of the twenty-eight Bursars in my class above-mentioned, eight are sons of persons in Aberdeen or elsewhere, who are perfectly able to pay for their education ; and let it be granted, for a moment, that these eight, from a feeling of honour or propriety, resign their Bursaries ; and let it be assumed, also, that these eight (what is very likely to be the case) are among the best scholars in the class. Observe what follows. Every year, from various causes, after the result of the competition is declared, there are resignations of persons standing high in the order of merit. If to these original resignations eight or half a dozen, or even three or four be added, the right to hold a Bursary is brought down to a very low standard of merit indeed ; the mediocre man, or the man beneath mediocrity, always mounting up to fill the place of each successive resigner. I conclude, therefore, from a view of all the circumstances, that we have more Bursaries in Aberdeen than we know how to use for the advantage of learning.

But there are other evils arising from the superfluity of Bursaries in this place, which must be specially mentioned. It acts, I am confident (and so long as human nature has its present constitution, must act), as a special bribe for the people of the north generally, and specially for the Aberdonians,

to use the highest scientific and literary institution in the district as a **FREE SCHOOL** for their green and unripe nurslings, whose shoulders they prematurely load with the crimson dignity of the gown. Many parents in Aberdeen, as in other places, we may, without any breach of charity, suppose, are not curiously inquisitive *how* their sons are educated; they are only solicitous that their young hopes may receive the best education that happens to be going; and if the best that happens to be going may be had for nothing, why, then, the sooner the dear boy gets a tincture of it the better; for he must go off to the counting-house in London, or to Calcutta, in a year or two, and make his bread. In this very natural feeling we see the reason why so many green and untutored striplings are continually sent us, who either ought never to have entered a College at all, but contented themselves with a commercial school, or at least ought not to have been sent till an additional summer or so had given firmness to the young brain, and precision to the mental glance. Strange fate that often attends the fairest plans devised by human benevolence as by human wit! The golden ladder that we fondly raised, looking proudly towards Parnassus, turns in the using into a leaden log that makes us gravitate only the more firmly to our native clod! A difficult dilemma this of the Bursaries altogether; yet an Academic Surgeon, if we had one, with a clean and decided cut, could cure it in a moment. Either by an Act of Parliament slump the Bursaries every two into one, which would diminish the temptation to abuse them by one-half, or, leaving them at their present value, transfer the half of them to the Grammar School, to the School of Old Machar, to the Inverness Academy, and to other preparatory institutions from which the greater number of our fresh students are yearly sent; at the same time fixing the standard of attainment by which the right to hold a Bursary is tested as high as possible. I can imagine objections to such a scheme; but as they are founded either in moral cowardice (the most common of all kinds of baseness) or in legal quibbling, I shall leave them to be answered quietly by those readers who have both honesty to own what is right, and courage to execute it.

Another evil of the Bursary system I have already hinted at, and only mention it here separately, for the sake of precision. A superfluity of Bursaries acts not merely as a drag in keeping down the Universities at the level of a Free School, but like the spring of a watch, which, being connected with a certain succession of inter-toothed wheels, causes a rotatory motion to proceed on the dial-plate from minute to

minute, and from hour to hour, with a most undeviating uniformity. The possession of the Bursary is, in like manner, inseparably linked with a certain fixed routine of scholastic studies; and while every point of this routine must be conscientiously gone through, other things that are not part of the machinery, though perhaps infinitely more important, come to be systematically neglected. There is, accordingly, if I mistake not, less spontaneous activity, less enterprise, and less varied development in the educational world of Aberdeen than perhaps of any other town in Scotland of the same importance. It is a strong argument in favour of the existing system—whatever it be—that you pay nothing for it. And accordingly I do not observe that men of talent in this place, who profess any art, however excellent, for which men must pay, receive that encouragement which they are entitled to expect. Mr. Calvert, for instance, though a great master of the manly and graceful art which he professes, has never, according to my judgment, received that countenance from our good citizens which he deserves; and I cannot help ascribing this neglect, among other causes, in some measure to the monotonous and mechanical influence of so many Bursaries. I request the reflective reader particularly to ponder this matter.

Look now at the Professors! If the gravitating power of Academic gold chains down the student too narrowly to a slavish routine of study, it chains him down also to an unvaried succession of Professors, from whom, however willing, it is impossible for him to escape. Like the colliers and salters before the Act 1775, he is *adscriptus glebæ*, and, like the Russian serf, must follow the fate of the acres which he delves. This appears to me to be a very serious evil, not only for the student but also for the Professor. A Trades' Bursar in New Aberdeen comes to Dr. Brown's Greek Class, not because either he or his guardians think that Dr. Brown is a better Grecian or a better teacher than Professor M'Pherson, but because he possesses a Bursary, which, like a loadstone, makes all choice impossible, and chains him to the Marischal rock. An Inverness Highlander comes to King's College, not because he thinks Dr. M'Pherson is a better Grecian or a better teacher than Dr. Brown, but merely because he is Professor in King's College. The principle in both cases is purely territorial; the student goes to this territory or to that because the all-potent gold leads him, or (what is worse) mere blind and brutish custom and unreasoning conservatism. The Professor, meanwhile, sits in his chair; a somnolent drone; a finical pedant; or a crotchety

rattle-skull—no matter which ; he deals out his tickets and receives his fees, regardless alike of the party cabals of Whig and Tory at home and of the Erastian pranks of the King of Prussia abroad ; nothing but a direct quarrel between the centrifugal and the centripetal forces of the planetary system can disturb his repose ; no spur of reward stimulates his lagging diligence ; no fear of contempt and neglect casts a cloud over his serene complacency. If the poet who is interpreted sometimes nods, it will be nothing surprising if the proser who interprets him always sleeps.

Another, and unquestionably the most serious matter connected with the Bursary system remains ; what is the test of merit in the competition for a Bursary ? It is, as we all know, a Latin version—that is, a short piece of English to be translated into Latin. Why is this made the test, and the only test, of a young man's right to receive a free education in the two Universities of Aberdeen ? This is a question of vast practical moment ; as on it depends not merely the wisdom and justice with which the Bursary Funds are applied to the ends contemplated by the benevolent founders, but on this point, as on the keystone of the arch, the whole system of preparatory education in Aberdeen must, in a great measure, rest. That which is made the test of right to be admitted as a free scholar of the University, becomes necessarily the norm and law to which the teacher of the preparatory school accommodates his system of instruction. He has, in fact, little or no choice in the matter. Boys are sent to the school, that they be fitted to hold a Bursary and receive a free education in the Colleges ; and unless the Master will purposely disappoint the anxious wishes of the parents, he must subordinate every part of his school business, however important, for the last year or two at least, to an assiduous and uninterrupted version-drill.* Unless, therefore, there be some superlative pædagogic virtue in Latin versions above every other engine of juvenile

* “ The circumstances in which we are placed are such as naturally compel us to dwell more on writing versions than is perhaps done in some other places where circumstances are different. Most of the pupils at our school are intended for College ; and, with very few exceptions, all who come up to the higher classes are so intended, which is far from being the case with some similar institutions, even in other University towns. Besides our regular town scholars, not a few others, who have begun their Latin studies elsewhere, come for a longer or shorter period to our school, to prepare for College. The character of our school, therefore, is, and always has been, that of a seminary preparatory to the University ; and as the College Bursaries here, which are objects of ambition to all, are awarded to the best writers of Latin, it is obvious that must regulate, in no small degree, our course of study.” Dr. MELVIN.—*Report on the Public Schools of Aberdeen*, p. 102. November, 1834.

training, the influence of such an exclusive academical test in the inferior schools must be most pernicious. Its pernicious operation will be twofold. It will, in the first place, confine the sphere of pædagogic activity in the schools, artificially, and cripple the minds of the masters; and, in the second place, it will force all the varied capacity of youth into one narrow channel, without inquiring whether that be the natural channel for the particular person whose powers it is the business of the educator to develope. Now, what is a version? We shall view it either as a test of Latinity, or as a means of general culture, and see what it amounts to. Suppose I ask a boy to turn into Latin the following sentence:—*“A man can never learn to write and speak Latin readily, without first learning to think in Latin; and no man can learn to think in Latin who does not throw away at once the cumbrous English idiom which the version system continually interposes.”*

According to our practice in Aberdeen, it is not the vocables to be used in rendering this passage that will give the young version-writer any trouble; for he has a whole cargo of dictionaries and phrase-books with him, in which he may grope as long, and as slowly, and as stupidly as he pleases. What else is there, then? There is etymological form, syntactical union, and idiomatic turn; not the blood and body, but the joints and articulations of the language. It is, in fact, more a grammatical exercise than an exercise in the practical use of the language; and it will accordingly be found in practice that a boy may, by constant and unremitting exercise, be drilled into a wonderful dexterity in putting together this grammatical framework of Roman speech—a dexterity certainly to which his amount of available Latinity bears no proportion. This you may easily test, by turning up to a good version-maker any page of a common Latin author, and requesting him to translate it *ad aperturam*; in this case, you must not be surprised, if the ease with which he translates is in the inverse ratio to the accuracy with which he writes; and if you look, not for an intelligible translation merely, but for flexible and flowing, characteristic and idiomatic English, my experience teaches me that your Aberdeen Bursar and your compact version-maker will not only often fail to perceive the obvious meaning of the passage, but when he does seize it, he will express it in an idiom, not the Queen’s English at all, but something quite peculiar to himself; more like what a Dutchman or an Esquimaux would stammer out, trying to speak our language, than what the natural instinct of a sound

British tongue would bring forth.* It is indeed a natural but a very great mistake to imagine that higher powers of mind are required to translate English into Latin, than Latin into English; the dexterity in either case displayed by a boy has little to do with powers of mind, but a great deal with *the manner in which he has been drilled*; and if it seems more obvious and easy for a boy to translate into his mother tongue than into a strange one, the master can easily turn the scales the other way, by concentrating all his energies on the latter practice, and (as is done in Aberdeen) sacrificing every more natural and more important use of the mind to that one dry and bloodless, forced and artificial syntactical drill.† So far as fine mental susceptibilities are concerned, I, for one, have not the least doubt that there are opportunities for evoking them in *ad aperturam translation*, which the present version system cannot possibly present. To seize the hidden allusion, to connect the delicate thought in a fine passage of a Classic author, requires the exercise of a species of talent of which the version-maker has often not the most remote conception.‡ The whole training, indeed, of the version-maker

* I have proofs of this every year in my class; and if I find a young man particularly fluent in translating from Latin into English, I venture a guess, in which I am generally right, that this man was not educated in Aberdeen, and that he is not a Bursar.

† “Would you say that the students come up better prepared now than they did when you were a student at the University?” “In one respect they are; from the value of the bursaries here, they are *drilled into writing Latin*; but I do not think they are so well prepared in other respects. In general knowledge, they are much more deficient, because their sole attention has been directed to writing Latin; their object is to gain a bursary, and if they gain that they think everything is done. Until we adopted the habit of examining the Bursars at the commencement of every session, our Bursars were the idlest and most careless students we had.” Professor SCOTT.—*Evidence*, 1827, p. 44.

‡ As an edifying contrast to the system of teaching the Classics which the narrow Bursary Test in Aberdeen, necessarily fosters, nothing could be better than the following extract from the life of the late Dr. Arnold, one of the most valuable books in a pedagogic as well as in a religious point of view, that has been published in the present age:—

“In the common lessons, his scholarship was chiefly displayed in his power of extempore translation into English. This he had possessed in a remarkable degree, from the time that he was a boy at Winchester, where the practice of reading the whole passage from Greek or Latin into good English, without construing each particular sentence word by word, had been much encouraged by Dr. Gabell, and in his youthful vacations during his Oxford course, he used to enliven the sick-bed of his sister, Susannah, by the readiness with which, in the evenings, he would sit by her side and translate book after book of the history of Herodotus. So essential did he consider this method to a sound study of the Classics, that he published an elaborate defence of it in the *Quarterly Journal of Education*, and, when delivering his Modern History Lectures at Oxford, where

tends to make him a slow and an accurate, rather than a quick and a susceptible man. He may even be, or look very like what one generally calls stupid; and if you wish to convince yourself how little of real practical readiness he has in the use of any tongue, living or dead, you have only to put up some single object before him—say a stuffed eagle or a statue of Apollo—and ask him to describe what he sees, in Latin or English, and he will stare as if he saw a ghost. English he will not speak, for of that he knows absolutely nothing; Latin, also, he will not speak, for though he knows something of this, the principal part is in his dictionary—only a small fraction in his brain, and nothing at all upon his tongue. Do you wish, farther, to pry into the hidden stores (for there is evidently nothing for show) of this young grammarian, and to discover whether his brain is as well furnished with human facts and feelings, as with the stiff cranks and screws of ancient Roman speech? Alas! in this direction I can promise you even less than in the other; for, in reading Cæsar and Livy, the young aspirant for a free education in Marischal College, has been so curiously occupied with observing the regimen of *Qui* and *Cum*, that he had no sympathies left for the heroes of the story, no memory for the facts, no imagina-

he much lamented the prevalence of the opposite system, he could not resist the temptation of protesting against it, with no other excuse for introducing the subject, than the mention of the Latin style of the middle age historians. In itself, he looked upon it as the only means of really entering into the spirit of the ancient authors; and requiring as he did besides, that the translation should be made into idiomatic English, and if possible, into that style of English which most corresponded to the period or the subject of the Greek or Latin writer in question, he considered it further as an excellent exercise in the principles of taste, and in the knowledge and use of the English language, no less than those of Greece or Rome. No one must suppose that these translations in the least resemble the paraphrases in his Notes to Thucydides, which are avowedly not translations, but explanations; he was constantly on the watch for any inadequacy or redundancy of expression—the version was to represent, and no more than represent the exact words of the original, and those who, either as his colleagues or pupils, were present at his lessons well knew the accuracy with which every shade of meaning would be reproduced in a different shape, and the rapidity with which he would pounce on any mistake of grammar or construction, however dexterously concealed in the folds of a free translation.” Vol. i. p. 149.

“The exercise of extempore translation is the only thing in our system of education which enables a young man to express himself fluently and in good language, without premeditation. Wherever it is attended to, it is an exercise of exceeding value; it is, in fact, one of the best possible modes of instruction in *English composition*; * * * * * If men are tried by written papers only, one great and most valuable talent, that of readiness, and the very useful habit of retaining presence of mind, so as to be able to avail one’s self, without nervousness, of one’s knowledge, and to express it at once by word of mouth, are never tried at all.”—*Do.* ii. p. 119—where are some good remarks on the method of examination generally.

tion to piece together the beautiful fragments of the Classic panorama that he has been handling with his fingers. Altogether, the expert versionist and the talented Bursar looks more like a pedant than a man ; and this, in my opinion, is the only product that, from the operation of such a narrow and merely grammatical system, we are legitimately entitled to expect. But Nature loves to fool us pædagogues, and produces mer sometimes also, even under the Version System, to prove her independence.

What then, in a single word, is the practical conclusion from all this ? I conclude that versions are a good exercise in the logic of language, nothing else ;* but that, as mere

* I do not think I could possibly either describe more justly, or praise more highly, the version exercise in Aberdeen, than by calling it, as has been done in the text, an admirable juvenile logic ; in case, however, any one should imagine that I have been too scanty and laconic in the setting forth of its virtues, to show my good-will, I shall here set down at full length a late eulogy of versions, from the pen of a gentleman who is as open as any man to the evils resulting from their present unnatural excess :—“It must be admitted that the ‘drilling’ practised in the writing of Latin in Aberdeen schools, and the exact grammatical acquaintance with the language which it promotes, gives to Aberdeen education, in one point, a distinguished superiority. It lays a foundation for a thorough acquaintance with the Latin language, valuable in those few instances in which a zeal for classical learning, under other influences, happens to be formed. This is its benefit to the few. But to all trained under this system it confers a benefit of a more important kind. This is the mental training—the habits of accurate observation—the power of analysis, memory, and judgment, which it promotes. Like the Mathematics, classical learning taught in this manner serves one most important purpose of education, even although never carried out to its own proper end, as a means of discovering and conversing with moral and physical truth. Be the defects of our present system what they may, let us be grateful for the important influence for doing good which it has conferred on very many, in faculties sharpened and invigorated, immensely above the powers of uneducated men.”—The Rev. AL. ANDERSON.—*Letter i.* To every word of this, every intelligent educationist must subscribe ; it is always necessary, however, on account of the perversity of some persons, and the stupidity of others, to observe that, in the moral and intellectual world, a thing essentially good only requires to be ridden a little too hard, and straightway it becomes an evil—every virtue becomes a vice, soon as it is intolerant of other virtues, monopolizing and tyrannical. Of the writing of Latin exercises generally, I would recommend to the attention of the educationist, an excellent essay in the *Journal of Education*, No. xviii. To the writer’s assertion, “that in the early stages of instruction three times as much should be written as is read,” I am not sure that I would have any particular objection, *provided the teacher is a perfect master of that best plan which least imposes the eye and ear to error, and knows how to handle his tools dexterously.* I suggest, in addition, that *in all stages of instruction at least as much should be spoken and recited aloud as is written—the master accustoming himself to declaim freely, and without book, observing accurately the quantity of every syllable, and the scholar echoing back in the same way what he hears.* The neglect of this has been productive of many evil consequences. I also beg leave, as a final *caveat*, to present the following extract from a very sensible work by a practical man :—

“It is not by writing exercises in any language that we learn that lan

Logic will never teach a man to think, and many men learn to think admirably without it, so mere versions will never teach a man Latin, much less *Humanity*; and that, therefore, the present Bursary Test ought to be extended, enlarged, and improved in various ways, so as to meet the wants of the juvenile mind, and act as a healthy spur, not as a morbid incubus on the schools. As all boys have not the same turn of mind, and as all schoolmasters do not excel in the same department of teaching, I would divide the Bursaries into two great classes—Literary Bursaries and Scientific Bursaries. Those who come forward as competitors for the first class of Bursaries I would test, as at present, by a grammatical exercise, that is, a translation from English into Latin; only I would make it much shorter, and would not allow the use of a dictionary. To this I would add a passage from some Classic author to be translated into English, also without a dictionary; and in judging of the English, I would make it an essential matter that it should not only be correct as to the meaning, but fluent and idiomatic in the turn. A few questions on Ancient and Modern History and Geography would close the examination.* For the Scientific Bursaries, again, I would propose, as the subjects for testing, Arithmetic, Geometry, the first four books of Euclid, the elements of Algebra up to Simple Equations, and the elements of Natural History. Were this system adopted, we should soon see a variety, a

guage; it is only by an extensive and attentive reading of the authors who have written it. It is no difficult matter to write a few sentences without violating the rules of grammar, and of course to every writer his own construction and expressions are perfectly clear; but the real difficulty is, to understand readily the writers in prose or in verse who have excelled in their own idiom. *It is very possible for a person to know by heart all the rules of the Latin language, as they have been collected by Lilly, Ruddiman, Zumpt, or any other grammarian, and yet be unable to translate even Cornelius Nepos. This is actually the case with boys, who, through some circumstance or other, are taken away from school after having been there eighteen months or two years. According to the present mode of education, they will know the syntax, but scarcely anything else. But suppose the pupil should go on and write exercises for six or seven years, it will never be from his own compositions that he will obtain a pure, elegant, and correct style; for his compositions being still the produce of one unskilled in the language, must be affected by his deficiency, and betray the modern hand that wrote them.*" LE VERT.—*A General and Practical System of Teaching and Learning Languages*, by C. Le Vert, London, 1842.

This extract shows, as clearly as possible, the practical absurdity of forcing a boy to write a language out of all proportion to his reading, especially when that writing is practised without a constant and skilful reference to a model.

* This last element is essential, to prevent the study of language from becoming too verbal, and therefore pedantic. Boys should be taught to read for the story more than for the words. Many of our schoolmasters have sadly neglected this point.

vigour, and a vitality in our preparatory training, which, under the present deadening influence, is impossible. We, the Professors, have the whole machinery of the schools in our own hands ; and if we are slow to do our duty in this stimulating and regulating office, it is the business of the public to force us.*

But a more important matter than even the Bursaries remains--the SCHOLARSHIPS--both very good things, though by no means essential to the idea of a University in general ; both, however, almost a necessary adjunct of Universities in a poor country like Scotland. The Bursaries, we have just seen, in Aberdeen at least, have been overdone ; they provide ample means of academical education to all poor and talented young men who require it, and to many who are neither poor nor talented ; nay more than this, they yearly allure within the precincts of the University not a few young men who ought never to have entered an academical class-room at all, and who, by doing so, can only be, and in fact are, intellectually ruined.† So anxious have our benevolent countrymen been to afford to all the grand boon of elementary education ; but like benevolent individuals of another class, and the framers of the old English Poor Laws, they have poured out their bounty indiscriminately and without measure ; the balsam has become a poison in the using, and men have made themselves lame by the too frequent use of those crutches which should have helped them to walk. With regard to *Scholarships*, the case is altogether different. In Marischal College we have only one--the Mathematical Bursary--of a small amount (£30

* The above sketch of the effects of the Version System, as practised in Aberdeen, is taken mainly from my own experience and observation, and this in a matter that comes immediately under my own eye, is, and must be, a most important element in the decision of such a question. It will be satisfactory, however, to the citizens of Aberdeen, to hear, on the same point, the evidence of a person altogether unconnected with the Humanity Class in Marischal College, but who, from his official situation, has the best means of forming a practical judgment on the subject. The following extract is from a letter written to me by an experienced classical teacher in one of the most flourishing academies of the north :--“ *I have long been of opinion that the present Bursary Test at the Aberdeen Colleges is highly injurious to the intellectual improvement of the youth in the north of Scotland. Before a student can have any chance of obtaining the wished-for prize, he must have devoted nearly his whole time and attention for years, to one department of one branch of education. Besides, the Version System converts the means into an end, substituting a mere knowledge of grammatical construction and of certain verbal niceties for that acquaintance with the history, eloquence, and poetry of the ancients, which is so well calculated to form the reason and taste, and to give sensibility, generosity, and enthusiasm to the youthful character.*”

† See the Evidence of Professor SCOTT, *infra*. p. 53.

annually for two years), given at the commencement of the fourth year of the Curriculum to the student who, on examination, shall be found to excel most in Mathematical knowledge.* Suppose, now, this reward of successful exertion were doubled or trebled in amount, and that there were three such scholarships in Marischal College, and that they were enjoyed for five and not two years, what an impetus would not this give to the study of Mathematics in that institution! Perhaps too great an impetus, you will say; it might operate perniciously in forcing talent into the Scientific department that might receive a more congenial and felicitous culture in the Literary. That consequence is not only probable but certain; we see the daily evidence of it before our eyes in the Bursary system here, and in the forced study of Latin thereby induced; but the prevention is as easy as the consequence. Let the Scholarships, however many, be equally distributed over the different departments; and if there be three say of £50 for five years, conferred for high excellence in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy (for these two should always go together), let there be as many for high excellence in Natural History or Chemistry, and the same number for the students in Classics and Moral Philosophy. This would do more good in two years than an increase of Bursaries would do harm in twenty years; and, after all, it is nothing extremely magnificent or luxurious, but, in a country like Scotland, a plain and clamant academical necessity much more than the Bursaries. For why? Simply because the Scottish Church has no Bishops, and because it is not the fashion with the British Government to respect and to reward learning as some German sovereigns are reported to do. I say these Scholarships (though a thing almost unknown in Scottish Universities) are to be viewed as a matter of absolute necessity to their efficient working, and this can easily be shown. Bursaries we admit to be useful, and necessary for Scotland under wise limits. What, then, do Bursaries do? We take the young scholar at the bottom, as it were, of a high hill of difficulty, and then, by the help of an inclined plane and a ponderous machinery of screws and wheels and pulleys, we bring him, with cheers and gratulations, to the desired height. We then touch the crown of his head with a black cap, mutter a few Latin words over him, tell him that he is at

* There is also a small Divinity Scholarship of £12 for two years, the patronage of which belongs to Marischal College and King's College alternately.

liberty now to append A.M. to his name, and then we point to the high ridge of the double-peaked Parnassus that is glittering proudly in the far blue. But, alas! between the new-made Master of Arts and that same peak of Parnassus there lies a vast gulf, to pass which requires not only indomitable vigour and resolution—

“*Nunc animis opus, Ænea, nunc pectore firmo*”

—but stockings also, and shoes, and a stomach not without lining, and a little money in the purse. Meanwhile, however, the master of the machinery applies his hand to the catch, and away with a stroke of the pen go screws and wheels and pulleys and inclined plane; and down falls the gowned magister from his momentary elevation, and appears to all the world in his true dimensions—a mannikin in the mud. Or, do you perhaps imagine that the small fees of public and private tuition are to him the adequate reward of so many years of patient perseverance? Teach, no doubt, he will, and must both publicly and privately; but by this incessant fagging at the most elementary branches of instruction, if he manage to support his body, he will, in all probability also, blunt and deaden his mind. And then, instead of the twin-peaked Parnassus of literature, and the delectable mountains of science, you shall find him all his life, with much sweat and groaning, breaking stones in the valley of pædagogic Poverty, which (according to our Scottish arrangement) lies immediately behind the Academical Hill of Difficulty.*

* There is one method by which the inhabitants of Aberdeen could add a slight stimulus to Academical Education in this place, but which (so strange is the power of custom!), in a city overwhelmed with bursaries, is altogether neglected. The method I mean is by giving a *few annual prizes to the best students in the different classes*. It appears to me that the Town Council, or the Corporation of Advocates, might, at very little expense to themselves, confer on our students a very great benefit in this way. At the present moment, the prizes that are given in Marischal College are *altogether at the expense of the individual Professors*; and when a Professor, like myself and some of my colleagues, has two classes, it is manifest that slices of this kind out of a scanty salary will be sensibly felt. My own emoluments, for instance, as Professor of Humanity, amount to £300, £310, or, at the utmost, £320 a-year. Out of this I spend £10, £12, or £15 annually upon prizes; and after all they make a miserable show, and, like not a few other things in Marischal College, are more like the furnishing of a School than a University. It is plain, however, that academical prizes being a matter of public concernment and interest, ought to be provided for by the public; and as soon as the public do their duty in this respect, I think it is equally the duty of the Professors to *distribute these public prizes publicly, and to invite the public at large, and the friends and guardians of the academical youth specially, to witness the distribution*. Meanwhile, however, I have no prizes which I think worthy of the Univer-

You see, therefore, my good Fellow-citizens, and gracious Alumni of the Aberdeen Universities, what is to be done in this matter. Give us no more Bursaries; GIVE US SCHOLARSHIPS.* You have been over anxious about the foundation; have some care at length for the superstructure. Nor are the direct and immediate rewards of Scholarship only to be attended to; the prospective chances are even more to be considered. A considerable proportion of those who attend our Universities look forward to the Schoolroom or the Pulpit as the ultimate sphere of their activity. I repeat, therefore, what I said in the outset—RAISE THE STATUS OF THE SCHOOLMASTER. Throughout the length and breadth of the land, let £150 per annum be the minimum income of a Schoolmaster. From east to west also, and from north to south of Caledonia, in all the larger towns, let there be a Gymnasium or Upper School, with a Rector whose income shall not be less than £500 a-year, and other teachers with not less than £300 a-year. I need not say that, among the possible prospective rewards of Scholarship are to be ranked also the Professorships. The Professorship of Divinity in particular, in a country where there are no Bishoprics, ought to be munificently endowed. There ought to be in each of the four† Universities of Scotland four Professors of the Theological Faculty, a Professor of Systematic Theology, a Professor of Church History, a Professor of Biblical Criticism, and a Professor of Hebrew and Arabic. Of these Chairs the first should be worth £800 a-year, and the other three £500 a-year each. Such situations in prospect, under a well administered system of patronage, would enable country clergymen of superior talent to devote themselves to those studies, the cultivation of which might open to them a higher sphere of usefulness. At present, however, when a Divinity Professorship (like that of

sity; and I should be ashamed to see such prizes as I can afford to give made a public parade of in the magnificent Public Hall of the new buildings. So soon as we have any public prizes, I shall be the first to propose a public distribution of them; not sooner. Here, as in many other matters, we stand woefully behind GLASGOW. Everything in our Schools and Colleges is done in a corner.

* "There is one thing that is very much wanted in our Scottish Universities, namely, some young men having salaries, and constantly resident, who might act as tutors, such as the Fellows in the English Universities, supply the places of Professors suddenly taken ill, and be employed in other academical labours."—Dr. FORBES' *Evidence*, 1827, p. 19.

† I say *four*, because *two* Divinity schools in Aberdeen are not required, and are, besides, according to the present arrangements, not merely meagre, but altogether preposterous and absurd. See below, of the Union.

Marischal College, worth £117 a-year) is vacant, the question is not, *Who is the best man for the place?* but *Who is the best man that can afford to take the place?* Under such pitiful arrangements, who can wonder if it has been often asserted that the Church of Scotland, notwithstanding her Parochial Schools and University Tests, is fundamentally one of the most unlearned Churches in Europe, and, perhaps, has herself to blame, or her scurvy patrons, in some degree for the present low state of education in this country, both in the Schools and in the Colleges. With regard to the incomes of Professors in general, the Divinity Professors not excluded, I should wish to make, further, but one practical remark. *The more they are made to depend on the fees of the students the better.* This remark is especially necessary in Aberdeen, where the idle superfluity of Bursaries encourages parents in the pernicious idea that everything paid out of their own pockets for the education of their sons is a grievous tax. So long as such an idea is entertained, it is in vain to talk of elevating the academical standard. People can no more get good Professors than good Port Wine for nothing; and they ought not to be encouraged in the vain conceit. Encouraged, however, I fear they are in Aberdeen, both by the general influence of the Bursary system, and specially by the Professors themselves, who (so far as my observation goes since I came here), seem afraid of nothing so much as of raising the price of education. A very benevolent apprehension no doubt! but it is, in the nature of wares, not easy to improve their quality without raising their price; and it is also a fact that can be proved in figures and statistics—that *education (apart altogether from the Bursaries) is considerably, I believe I might say a great deal, cheaper in Aberdeen than in any other city of the same or inferior importance in Scotland.* It is not my opinion only, but the opinion of many intelligent persons who take a vital interest in the matter, that *education is a great deal too cheap in Aberdeen, and that the excessive cheapness of it, especially in the Universities, taken along with other circumstances, is one main cause of their present degradation.* For it must never be forgotten, that not cheapness but excellence is the first desideratum in University education. The University is not, or ought not to be, for everybody; but the Schools are. If, then, the Universities are to be raised, ill-paid Professors and short fees must not be spoken of even for a moment. One thing I will tell you plainly, Fellow-citizens, and mince nothing, that if you pay your Professors

as you do at present, you may get an eminent man now and then by chance, but if he remains with you one minute longer than is absolutely necessary for his own convenience, you have reason to congratulate yourselves on the enjoyment of a blessing infinitely beyond your desert. If you find, also, that your expected purple and fine linen turns out, on inspection, to be mere drugget and harden, you have yourselves to blame for the offence. There was no imposition in the case but what you practised on yourselves, by imagining that, with a few miserable coppers and silver pieces, you were to buy the raiment of a king.

I proceed now to make a very few remarks

IV.—On the degree of A.M. This matter, the capital and cornice of the educational pillar in the north, has at least one virtue, that, in consistency with the great law of good taste, it is in perfect keeping with the whole underlying masonry, and does not offend the eye by any disparity. Its organic principle—the principle which gives it existence and endurance—is **MEDIOCRITY**. It is, in fact, a **CERTIFICATE OF MEDIOCRITY**, and if understood in any other sense misleads. Not many years ago, as most of us may recollect, it had not even this merit; it was only a *certificate of attendance*. It has now, however, mounted a step or two out of absolute nonentity, and has become a sort of **SOMETHING** in the wide world—which world also has a right to exist—of mediocrity and patchwork.* Its practical value may be best apprehended from the following statement:—There are, say, twenty students annually in the Moral Philosophy or last year's class of the course at Marischal College. The whole of these usually come forward to claim the degree of A.M.; it seems to be a sort of etiquette with them, or traditionary law of the class; for I am not aware that it exists anywhere else in Scotland. They are examined by each Professor successively, as to their knowledge of that particular branch of the studies of the Curriculum which falls under his care, and classified according to their merits, in the following way:—

1.~ } ~~~~~Optime
2.~ }

* Here, again, we must beware of throwing the blame mainly on the Professors. I am willing to bear all just reproaches, but I must speak the truth. "HONOS ALIT ARTES," as we quoted already from *Cicero*; but, "in Scotland, there are no situations of any kind for which the degree of A.M. is available."—*Evidence of the late Dr. KNIGHT in 1827*, p. 102. This is a radical evil in the matter, which not the Senatus Academicus, but the country can cure.

3.....	}	~~~~~Bene
4.....		
5.....		
6.....		
7.....	}	
8.....		
9.....		
10.....	}	~~~~~Mediocriter, <i>plus</i>
11.....		
12.....		
13.....	}	~~~~~Mediocriter
14.....		
15.....		
16.....		
17.....	}	
18.....		
19.....		~~~~~Mediocriter, <i>minus</i>
20.....		~~~~~Male

The lists are then compared, and a nett result arrived at in similar terms. Now, how many of the candidates receive the degree, standing as they do in every possible gradation of merit, from *optime* down to *male*? The answer is—They all receive it, except the one who is marked positively **BAD**. This at least is the rule, so far as I have been able to understand it. The degree of A.M., therefore, with us, is not a degree conferring, or calculated to confer, any literary distinction; but it is intended merely to exclude absolute academical worthlessness—in common language—a *pass muster degree*. Now, what occurs as objectionable in this business is not that there should be such a degree in a University—for it is quite proper there should be some pass-muster degree—but that the highest literary honour belonging to the Faculty of Arts should be made common and profane, by being used for this purpose. If we give A.M. promiscuously to our mediocre students, and those within a shade of positive worthlessness, what honour have we reserved for our *optimes*, and our *benes*, and our *mediocriter*+, men who are either bright, or decidedly good, or very fair men? None in the world that I know, except that, by way of saving our blushes, if we have any, we take the two *optimes*, and make them figure in the *Aberdeen Journal* for a week, with the legible addition, **HONOURABLY DISTINGUISHED!!!** And this is our highest students' distinction, sufficient for no purpose that I know, except as an apology for not having something else. What, then, ought to be done? Plainly this; let the present examination remain as it is; only let the name be changed; let the men who successfully pass muster be called A.B.; and let the title of A.M. be reserved for a second competition, and of a

higher order.* And in this second competition, to secure the highest possible attainments, let it be optional to each candidate to choose the literary and philosophical, or the mathematical and scientific department, as may be most congenial to his talents and disposition; for the present method of heterogenous cramming, however useful as a general groundwork, can never co-exist with first-rate excellence in any department. It is by recognizing this principle, that Oxford and Cambridge have achieved such great reputation in their several spheres; *fas est et ab hoste doceri*; for that they have overdone the principle is no reason why we should forget to apply it altogether. The scheme which I here propose is a very salutary and a very simple one. I am not, however, at all certain that, were I to propose it in the Senatus, I should have the least chance of carrying it. There are some pegs of a pecuniary kind connected with this matter of A.M. that might plead much more strongly in favour of the worthless present practice, than any arguments that I could advance in favour of a better one.† Besides, there is the salutary dread of our great rival on Donside, that would act, I fear, in this, as I have seen it do in less important matters, with a powerful and paralyzing influence. It is for this, and other reasons, that I make the present appeal directly to the Public; and the Public, if they cannot achieve satisfaction any other way, ought to appeal to the Parliament.

In connexion with the matter of Academical Degrees, I have only further to state, that one glaring omission in the subjects of examination ought immediately to be supplied. I mean that every candidate for the degree of A.B. should be required to translate some common French book *ad aperturam*; and that every candidate for the degree of A.M., if he be in the scientific department, should be required to translate

* "The degree of Bachelor of Arts might be given at the end of four sessions, that of A.M. at the end of other two sessions, and to candidates who should pass an examination on higher and more difficult branches of literature and science than are required for the inferior degree." Dr. CRUICKSHANK.—*Evidence of 1827*, p. 97.

† There seems, indeed, to be something in the nature of a *Senatus Academicus* entirely averse to change of every kind. We, Professors, are perhaps the most Conservative of mortals. Professor SCOTT, in reference to some changes which he proposed in the method of conferring the degree of A.M. in King's College, remarks—"As there was a *great unwillingness to make a change, the change that I proposed was the slightest possible, in the hope that it would be adopted.*"—*Evidence*, p. 43. The Professors are quite unfit for such a business, if they are thinking always of the *slightest possible*, and not rather of the *best possible* reform.

ad aperturam any simple book belonging to the branch of science with which he is most familiar, in German or Italian ; and if he be in the literary department, he should be required to profess some familiarity with the main points of German or Italian literature, and be able to read any common literary work in the one language or the other, according to his option, *ad aperturam*. This arrangement contemplates that the degree of A.M. should not be taken till a year or two in the general case, or in special cases six months after that of A.B. I should wish, further, that no person be designated with the title of A.B. or decorated with that of A.M. without showing, at least, some such respectable acquaintance with the main facts and sequence of events in MODERN HISTORY, as a man of fair average education, and moving in good society will generally be found to possess. The omission of both these matters—modern languages and modern history—in our present academical degree, is merely one sign, among many, that, in some points, we are scholastic, and barbarous, and pedantic, and lamentably behind the age. Whether three new Professorships ought not to be appointed for these matters—viz., a Professor of the Romanesque languages, a Professor of the Teutonic languages, and a Professor of Modern History (for Ancient History belongs to the Professors of Latin and Greek), is a matter which I do not enter on. Such magnificent and manly additions to our present trivial and puerile complement of Chairs, 'twere unwise to allow the unreined fancy to dwell on. I have endeavoured, in this Letter, to keep my proposals within such moderate limits as a regard to decency and to fair play seemed to dictate.

Allow me now to draw these protracted strictures to a close, by a few observations on what has, in practice, proved a very thorny and thankless matter—what, to some, perhaps may appear a very difficult and dubious matter—but what, in fact, if there were only an honest will on both sides, and a strong hand above, would prove a very easy and a very obvious matter. I need not say that I mean

V.—The Union of the Two Universities. On this subject, I never heard but one opinion from any intelligent person unconnected with Aberdeen ; which leads to the obvious conclusion that the hindrances which have hitherto stood in the way of realizing so natural an idea, are rooted rather in petty local jealousies and prejudices, than in any just principle of national pædagogy. I never could see any reason urged

why these two institutions should not be united, which was not either at bottom one of those petty local jealousies and prejudices, or did not proceed upon the mutual animosity and inflamed suspicion of political partisanship (one of the permanent plagues of this country), or it might be, did not arise from confounding two questions plainly distinct—viz., the union of the Academic corporations, and the special arrangements with regard to the best method of teaching certain classes. It might be desirable, for instance, that certain classes, either on account of their numerousness, or on account of the manner of teaching most adapted to them, should continue double—that is to say, that two Professors should be continued to that department. Such an arrangement, however, implies nothing against the union. I, for one, decided as I am, and have always been, on the grand principle, have not the slightest objection, perhaps rather a preference for a specialty of this kind, whether affecting my own class, or that of any of my colleagues. As to the main question, the three unanswerable arguments in its favour are the following:—*First*, The faculties of Medicine, Divinity, and Law, in the two Universities, are at present on the most unfavourable and unsatisfactory footing imaginable. Separate, they maintain a meagre and dwarfish existence. The soil is too poor to nourish both in vigour. United, they would wax strong and lusty, and be as a tree that should overshadow the earth, and give shelter to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the air. In particular, the rising Medical School of this place, struggling manfully, as it has now for many years been doing, with meagreness and starvation, would be greatly benefited by the union. For Divinity, let the Church look to that; it is high time that it should. *Second*, The union of the two Colleges would put an end for ever to those jealous respects and apprehensions that I have so often alluded to in this Letter, and which are the only permanent fruits of any kind that seem to be educed from the juxta-collocation of the two corporations. I had heard, indeed, something of noble rivalry and generous emulation when I was a boy, but I have seen nothing but suspicion, and jealousy, and cowardice, since I was a man.* The two Universities do not watch one another (so

* “Do you think there is anything gained to literature by any emulation that may exist between the two Colleges?” “I am not aware of having felt anything of the kind myself; one Professor certainly likes to have a larger class than the other, but I consider that but a small advantage.” Professor SCOTT.—*Evidence*, 1827, p. 45. It might be a great ad-

far as I have seen) like two noble steeds, with ears erect and swelling nostrils, eager for an opportunity of passing one another on the narrow course of scientific excellence; but they appear to me rather like two naked children on the beach, speaking magnificently of what great things they will do, when they have once opposed the weight of their little bodies to the billowy tide; but *Tommy* protests all the while that he will not go in till *Bill* goes, and *Bill* protests as heroically that he will not go in till *Tom* goes; and so there is no motion at all, but only a talking about moving. I have been only five years now in this University, and yet I think I could name half-a-dozen of important details of Academical Reform which could have been carried had the two Universities been united, and these unworthy jealousies and cowardly mutual respects been for ever put an end to. *Third*, The Union of the two Universities would be a great saving of expense to the Public. The funds which are now inadequate for two institutions would, if united, supply the means of fitting up one in a manner worthy of the North of Scotland and the city of Aberdeen. Of anything that can be urged against these three considerations in favour of a union, I am utterly ignorant. The only objections I have ever heard worth a moment's consideration, are those which affect the detail of certain classes; and these objections, as I have already said, may be sustained in their full weight, without affecting the grand principle in the slightest degree. The matter is this.

Large classes, it is argued, are not so well taught as small ones. The unwieldy number of the classes (especially of the Greek and Latin), was and is one of the great causes why the students in Edinburgh and Glasgow are not subject to such a salutary discipline, and cannot be made the objects of such an effective drill, as is at present one of the grand recommendations of our Aberdeen Universities. Now, it is obvious that this advantage will be altogether lost by the proposed union; for if we consider the comparative number attending the two institutions, we shall find that, in the amalgamation contemplated, the number of students in the gown classes will be not merely doubled, but trebled.* Shall we, therefore, sacrifice one of our great characteristic educational

vantage did the size of his class depend in any degree on his talents; but see above, p. 33, on the *territorial system*.

* This year, in First Humanity Class, Marischal College, 53; in do. King's College, 82, according to my information.

advantages for the magnificent idea of a United College, which shall stuff the pockets of a few ambitious Professors, and cause the idle stranger, with his undistinguishing eye, to stare?*

They who urge this objection, without a real desire for the union of the two institutions, will of course think it settles the whole affair. Those who look upon the general measure as far too important to be dropt for any objection of detail, however strong, while they allow the present one to be not merely plausible, but sound and reasonable, will find no difficulty, with me, in expressing their willingness to meet it in either of the two following ways:—

First, By giving the objection full weight in every case where it is applicable—that is to say, by having in the United University two Professors of Greek, two of Latin, two of Mathematics, and two of Natural Philosophy. These are all the classes in which, allowing the fullest weight to the objection, a double Professorship would be necessary. For Chemistry and Natural History in the United College could not be both imperative, but the obligation to study them would be in the optional form (see p. 16, *supra*), either one or the other, as each student might fancy; and in this way the students would be divided, and neither Professor have to manage a class much above his present average—while the Moral Philosophy Class would not only not be injured, but greatly improved by any considerable accession, whether in a duplicate or triplicate ratio, to its present meagre furnishing.†

Second, By disregarding the objection altogether in the first place, but providing, as I think might be done, effectually against the practical evil apprehended, by adding to each of the Chairs above-named, an assistant Professor; or (if the name appears too sovereign to be shared) an authorized Tutor. This plan would, in my opinion, remove all difficulties; for not only would it be the Tutor's special business to keep an exact eye on every student, to examine his exercises regularly, and report to the Professor, to exercise in every point as minute and exact a power of drill as any Professor now can do

* “With regard to the union of the Colleges of Arts, I am decidedly of opinion that it would be a very great loss to the public, because it would be impossible to carry on the system of examination established here, were our classes double what they are now.” Dr. FORBES.—*Evidence*, 1827, p. 21.

† When we talk of *doubling* and *trebling*, we talk of course with reference to the numbers in that College where the attendance is most scanty. Last year, for instance, if the first Humanity Class in Marischal College had been added to the same class in King's College, the increase *as respects King's College* would have amounted only to *one-third* of the combined class.

in classes of the present amount, but the Professor himself would thus be freed from a great deal of that elementary fag work which at present only serves to blunt his faculties, and prevent his free soaring into those higher regions of his department whence strength and inspiration is drawn for the spirited performance of his daily routine. There is no error more great than to imagine that the more a Professor sweats himself in revising exercises and such rudimentary work, the more excellently is he performing his duty. He is performing his duty in one sense, indeed, very excellently; he is breaking stones and measuring inches diligently; the outward muscle is well exercised; but the spiritual steam is not fed, the celestial pinions are not flapped; he is, by continually stooping to help creepers, himself learning to creep. I say therefore decidedly, if all the gown classes are united, let a Tutor be added to each one that is more numerous attended; let him be an authorized person, appointed by independent examiners, and enjoying a salary of £50 or £100 a-year. Such authorized Tutorships would, in fact, be scholarships, and scholarships of the best kind, forcing the recipient of public money to employ a certain part of his strength for the public good. They would, moreover, be an admirable training school for young teachers, and a nursery of efficient Professors, experimentally acquainted (what soaring Professors sometimes are not) with the most minute details of their business; to effect which end the more completely, I would enact that no such Tutorship should be held for more than three years successively, and that re-election should in no case be permitted.

Am I, therefore, decidedly in favour of this plan? Or has not the first method also advantages? I am inclined to think that you, my Fellow-citizens, will to a man prefer the second plan; for, with a single stroke, it whips you out of many difficulties, and that certainly, in this perplexed world, is no mean recommendation. If this plan be adopted, you may, without calling for a single penny of the public money, at once increase the salaries of the Professors, so as to make them objects of ambition to men of high talent, and at the same time create Scholarships and establish a sort of Normal School within the very walls of the University.* The pros-

* Only consider what might be done with the money at present paid to the Principals for doing nothing! There should be no separate Principalship; but the most talented or the most sensible Professor should be made

pect certainly is fair. The great disadvantage of the other plan is its expense. Why should the public be obliged to maintain two Professors shabbily, if one treated respectably can do the business? This argument from cheapness in a poor country (academically, at least, poor) must always have great weight with practical men; otherwise, for myself I am partial to small classes. I like to get acquainted with every boy as soon as possible, to bring him into notice, to stimulate his good qualities, and to check his bad ones with as much cunning iteration as may be. Only when perfectly familiar and personally intimate with each, can I say thoroughly that I know how to manage them. There are very few who, if thus minutely studied and personally brought forward by the teacher, will be found altogether insensible to the word of admonition when required. This advantage and this pleasure (for to me it is a pure pleasure) of minute personal knowledge must, in the nature of things, be lost in proportion as the number to be superintended increases; and, considering what a raw and ill-assorted congregation of auditors we have, I must confess that, if a University Class of forty or fifty be, even under the best management, a bad substitute to most boys for a school, a University Class of double or triple that number will have a chance to be a worse one. The importance of this argument, however, in favour of small classes, will diminish every year, as the preparatory training of our academical tyros improves. Neither must I omit to mention that Professor Pillans, according to the account in his Evidence (p. 431), has much diminished the evils arising from large classes, by the use of the MONITORIAL system; and though I have never had much occasion to employ this machinery myself, I know enough of it to be convinced how much a man of comprehension and vigour may make of it.*

Principal, with £100 a-year or so added to his other income; while the rest of the money at present needlessly squandered on a name would form an admirable fund for the first fat Scholarship. Here is a harvest indeed crying for the sickle! Will no man come to reap it?

* The following passage from the valuable evidence of a Professor of King's College, already several times quoted, starts a point with regard to the size of the classes that I have omitted. "At present, a number of parents send up their children to us, from not knowing what to do with them; they come to us well aware that they are not to be educated to any of the professions, and they are idle and inattentive. Now, *I think if such were cut off from attending us, we would not suffer much from the size of the classes.*" Professor SCOTT.—Evidence, p. 44. Compare what is said in the text, *supra*, p. 40. The learned Professor's observations on this point apply, I suspect, with double force to Marischal College.

One advantage arising from the union of the Universities, while the principal gown classes remain distinct, is too important to be passed over in silence. The corporations being no longer distinct, the corporation funds, of course, belong neither to King's College, nor to Marischal College, but to the UNITED UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN. Of these funds, the Burse funds form a principal part, and the consequence will be, that the successful candidate is no longer tied down to Professor Gray or Professor Thompson, but he may attend either of them he pleases; for both are Professors of the same branch of science in the United University to which his Bursary is attached. A way will thus be opened to salutary competition and rivalry among the Professors, of which, in our present dull and torpid state of hereditary monopoly, we have not the most remote conception. The students will not be transferred, as at present, with the most slavish sequence, from room to room, but they will walk with free choice as they ought to do, from man to man*; and a political jobber or other unscrupulous patron, will be afraid to smuggle in a minion into a vacant Chair, whose worthlessness the students can any time, after the first lecture, in the most significant way possible attest, by leaving him to lecture to the walls.

One other observation with reference to the size of the classes, an intelligent friend, who studied in Glasgow (decidedly the most vigorous University in Scotland), suggested to me; and it is this. The Logic Class in that institution in which he studied, contained at least 160 students, and yet all were kept, not merely in constant drill and exercise, far superior to anything of the kind known in Aberdeen, but in a state of literary excitement and enthusiasm quite delectable. Now, if Professor Buchanan, in Glasgow, can manage this in a class which is and has long been pre-eminently a practical class, surely an Aberdeen Doctor might do the same. It may be quite true that, according to our old methods, we could not teach 120 as well as 80 in a class; but there may be other methods for doing this, and most effective ones too. For my part, though, as I said, I am partial to small classes, I look with no direful apprehensions on the prospect of classes double or even triple their present number. New circumstances, to an inventive and a willing mind, suggest new

* I here speak of the students as if they were, what they ought to be, *young men*, and not mere *boys*; of course, so long as they are gowned in their present unripe state, their parents or guardians must exercise the right of choice, in academical as in other matters, for them.

measures; and of one thing I am sure, classes of double the number will likely contain double the amount of talent, and create a double amount of enthusiasm. My learned colleague, Dr. Brown, once told me, that the largest Greek Class he ever had in Marischal College was the best. So various are the aspects of things apparently the most simple.

And now, Fellow-citizens, my task, for the present, is done. I have not spoken about everything that stands commented on in the bulky records of our two barren Commissions; but I have spoken about many things, and these the most urgent, the most important, and the most intimately interwoven. Shortly summed up, the principal matters to which I have successively directed your attention, and in the shape of direct public duty obligatory upon you, are the following:—

I.—Do all that you can now unremittingly to raise the status of the Schoolmaster.

II.—Build a new Grammar School.

III.—Raise the salaries of the Rector and the other Teachers, and modify and extend the sphere of instruction, according to the best and most recent pædagogic experience of England, Germany, and Holland; of Edinburgh, Ayr, Inverness, and Glasgow.

IV.—Present a petition to the Universities, requesting them to alter, modify, and extend the Bursary Test.*

V.—Present a petition to Parliament, requesting them to take into immediate consideration the state of the Scottish Universities, as represented in the University Commission reports, and to take effectual measures for the union of the Universities, the elevation and extension of the Curriculum, for the regulation of the Burse funds, the establishing of Scholarships, the due remuneration of the Professors, and other matters.

* I forgot to state above that there is a measure at present before the Senatus for modifying the Bursary Test; but as it proceeds on the principle of making the *slightest possible* change on existing arrangements (see p. 47, note), its result of course will be the slightest possible improvement. As an omen, however, of a more perfect work to come, and as a symptom of motion in the right direction, I give it a most hearty welcome. It consists merely in adding to the present version exercise a piece of Latin, to be done into idiomatic English, *the errors to be counted in all cases in both exercises*. This last proviso is important to be noted, as the translation from Latin into English at present practised in King's College is, according to my information, then only taken into account when two versions are equal. Of course its influence in modifying the version monopoly, and in cultivating the English style of the competitor, is almost nothing.

Do these things, or something like these, *earnestly*, and you are sure of success. For myself, whatever be the event, I feel happy in having added my voice to the many that have already lifted up their testimony to lament the multiplicity of hereditary and consuetudinary ills by which academical education in this place is oppressed. I feel confident also that, if not this day, or to-morrow, or the day after that, some time or other certainly, and that at no great distance, I shall be found not to have testified in vain. “NIL ENIM DESPERANDUM,” as the eloquent father writes, “NON CANIMUS SURDIS.” Truth is a winged seed, that, when once blown abroad, will take root in strange places, and when once rooted, its growth is in the charge of Him whom no man shall hinder. In the full faith of which,

I have the honour,

FELLOW CITIZENS,

With all fidelity and respect,

To subscribe myself,

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN S. BLACKIE.

POSTSCRIPT ON THE DICK BEQUEST.

IN the examination questions circulated by the Administrators of this Fund, just received, I find a prefatory note of peculiar significance. While in "*Geography, English Literature, History, and Chronology*," a marked improvement is represented as having taken place among the candidates, "*Greek, Arithmetic, and Geometry*," remain still at a very low ebb. Now, if this intimation of the Examinators for the present year be compared with a statement made by the Trustees of the Fund, in their Report published in 1844, some important conclusions will follow. In that Report, p. 53, we read, "the greatest deficiency occurred in *Geography, History, Chronology, and Greek*, and it will be observed that ——— only professed *Geometry*." This deficiency refers to the year 1835. Well, since that date, it appears that *Geography, History, and Chronology* are much improved, while *Geometry* and *Greek* remain as they were, coupled in the lowest prostration with *Arithmetic*. Now, this result is most encouraging to the friends of education in Aberdeen. For the improvement in *History* and *Geography* is, no doubt, to be attributed in some measure to the late reforms (small and peddling as they were) introduced into the Grammar School by the exertions of the late Thomas Bannerman and other intelligent citizens.* It is to be attributed also to the salutary influence of such institutions as the West-end Academy and Mr. Tulloch's School, which do not allow themselves to be trammelled by the fetters of the pedantic Version System. But there is still a great deal to be done in this province, as I, who keep a strict watch over it, can distinctly testify. The bulk of students in my class are anything but well-informed in ancient and modern *Geography* and *History*;

* It is due, however, to Mr. Bannerman and the other intelligent citizens who moved at that time, to state that the "small and peddling" nature of the reforms thus made belonged not to their original idea; but the matter, some how or other, was bungled in the execution, and the good easy principle of the *slightest possible change* carried the day.

and the only way to bring up these matters to their natural level is, as I have stated in the text, *to make them part of the Bursary Test*. But the deficiency in Arithmetic and Geometry and Greek is a much more serious affair. It is easy for young men, in these days of cheap books, to make up by private reading the gross deficiencies in Geographical, Historical, and Literary knowledge which the present scholastic and academic arrangements necessitate ; but Arithmetic, Geometry, and Greek, demand more tough application, and if neglected at school, are not so easily recovered afterwards. Now the fact is, as stated in the text, that they *are* so neglected in the schools ; and for a thorough training of mere boys, the present academical system is the most unsuitable that can be conceived. Arithmetic, if not thoroughly mastered at school, can seldom or never be learned at College ; and Greek taught for two years, with a vacation of seven months in the twelve, is perfectly ludicrous. How far the same objection applies to the rudimentary teaching of Geometry in the University I am not so competent a judge ; but surely better Geometers would be produced in the north, if the more simple Books of Euclid and the Elements of Algebra were taught in the Schools for ten months in the year, instead of five in the Universities.

